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Leszek Kolakowski:
How the Enlightenment Went Wrong

THE NEW REPUBLIC

The Myth of Political Consultants
by Fred Barnes

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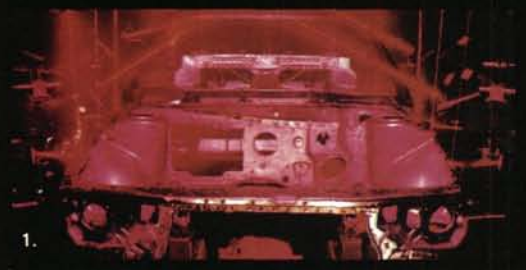

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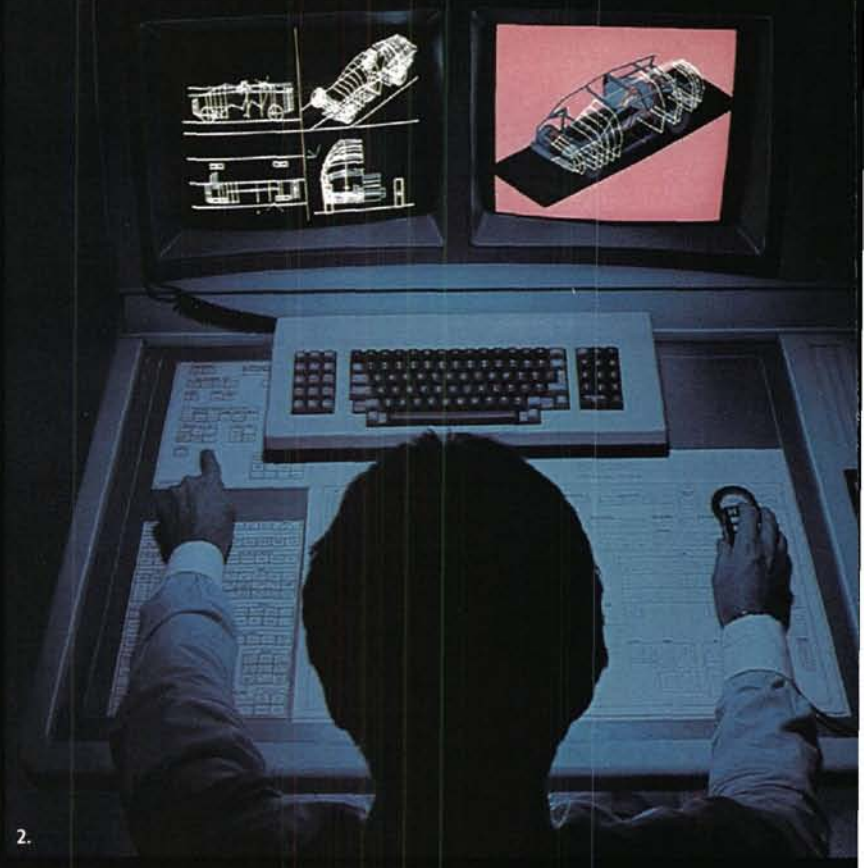

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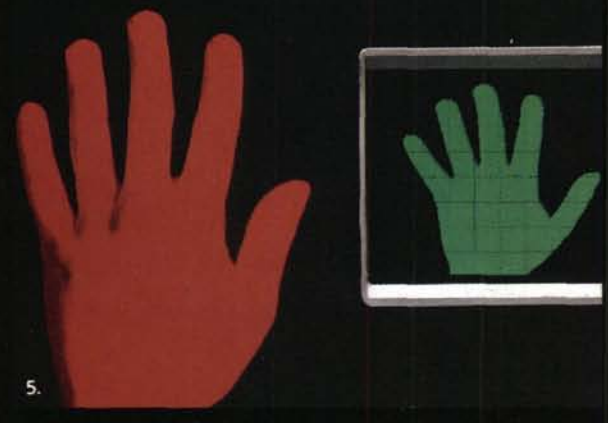

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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,726

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FROM WASHINGTON

NO WHITE FEATHER, PLEASE

As an American male who might have served in Vietnam but didn't (like 92 percent of my male age cohort), my attitude toward Vietnam veterans is a mixture of respect, sympathy for those who suffered, and a sneaking envy. Envy of the moral credential, and also of the "classic male experience," as William Broyles sardonically labels it in his new book, *Brothers in Arms* (Knopf). "Gentlemen in England, now a-bed, shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here. . . ." (*Henry V*). Well, I wouldn't go that far. But I certainly don't begrudge Vietnam vets their belated glory.

On the other hand, should I actually feel ashamed for not having served in a war I didn't support? That is the drift of a lot of recent commentary on Vietnam. I never dodged the draft. In fact, I was clear in my own mind that opposition to the war couldn't justify evading military service, though I left open the possibility of cowardice. Fortunately, thanks to a high lottery number, I was never put to that test. But I could have enlisted, I suppose—an idea that certainly never crossed my mind.

My friend James Fallows wrote a seminal article 11 years ago observing that the burden of the Vietnam War fell mainly on lower-class kids without the wit or connections to avoid the draft. If the sons of the decision-making class had been fighting and dying—or going to jail in protest—the war would have ended a lot sooner, he argued.

Fallows's point was that his Harvard classmates were morally culpable for not having made greater sacrifices to *stop* the war. Yet his theme has been taken up and twisted over the past decade by people with the opposite agenda. The most recent example is President Reagan, who said at Arlington Cemetery on Memorial Day, "It was the unpampered boys of the working class who picked up the rifles and went on the march." The "boys of Vietnam," Reagan said, "fought a terrible and vicious war without enough support from home. . . . They chose to reject the fashionable skepticism of their time; they chose to believe and answer the call of duty."

Broyles's book, like every other Vietnam memoir I've read, makes vividly clear that there was no lack of skepticism, and no great belief in the larger goals of the war, among those who did the fighting. But this characteristic Reagan flight of fancy is just part of a larger moral inversion. The burden of remarks like Reagan's is that it was somehow the antiwar movement, rather than the prosecutors of the war, who sent American boys off to fight and die in a dubious cause.

The notion that people who opposed the war were indifferent or even hostile to the fate of American soldiers does not accord with my memory. This is what the protests were mostly about. And who can doubt that if it weren't for the protests, many more would have fought and died? In fact, a common radical critique of the mainstream antiwar movement was that it was too concerned about the American body count, ignoring the cost of the war to the Vietnamese. It's this radical critique that rings somewhat hollow today, given what happened to Vietnam after we gave up. But the focus of most opponents of the war—ultimately, a majority of Americans—was that the cost of what we were trying to achieve was simply too high. It was clear at the time who was bearing the cost.

Public attitudes toward Vietnam veterans have been wrongly enlisted in a campaign to undo this historical judgment and its implications for the present foreign policy debate. The campaign has involved an interesting reversal of postures. The standard neoconservative "new class" analysis of liberal causes accuses liberals of ideological self-aggrandizement in the guise of compassion. Liberals, the argument goes, instill a sense of grievance and victimization among groups such as blacks and the poor in order to justify government programs that create work for cadres of professional liberals (the "new class") and promote the liberal agenda.

If ever there was a group persuaded by ideologues that it could blame its problems on society, it is Vietnam veterans. Only this time it is conservative ideologues who have joined with the usual legions of media hypesters and "caring professionals" to encourage brooding self-pity. Most Vietnam vets actually "had a good war," as the British say. Ninety-one percent in a 1980 poll said they're glad they went. As a group, Vietnam vets have higher education levels and incomes than men of their age group who didn't serve. Of the small fraction who have had readjustment problems, there's no question that most are genuine victims of the war.

But thousands of vets are wasting their lives hanging out at storefront "vet centers." Sixty or so were reported recently to be living like wild men in the Florida jungle because, according to one of them, "Vietnam vets are square pegs in round holes." The defense of "post-traumatic stress disorder" (PTSD) has been invoked to beat raps from chronic absenteeism to murder. The flashy vet suicide is a newspaper staple. Yet you don't hear conservatives suggesting that "liberal guilt" has created a "vet culture" of dependency and irresponsibility, because this culture serves their ideological purpose. The vets' grievance (nobody appreciates them) bolsters the conservative grievance (nobody appreciates the war).

Obviously there's no logical connection. It's possible to appreciate the veterans' sacrifice without approving of the last war—let alone the next one—or feeling guilty about not having served. Those who insist that nothing less than full retroactive support for the war is a dishonor to the veterans are the ones denying them their full due.

In England during World War I, as thousands were dying pointlessly in the trenches, pretty girls went around handing white feathers—a symbol of cowardice—to men who weren't in uniform. The one group currently being handed white feathers who may deserve them are the so-called "war wimps" or "chicken hawks"—prominent Americans helping to spread war fever today who avoided service during Vietnam, like Sylvester Stallone (who was teaching at a girls' school in Switzerland) and various Washington hard-liners. As for those of us who opposed that war and didn't serve, it's true we'll never know for sure in our hearts whether we'd have the courage to answer the call when our nation really needed us. But so far, at least, we've gotten it right.

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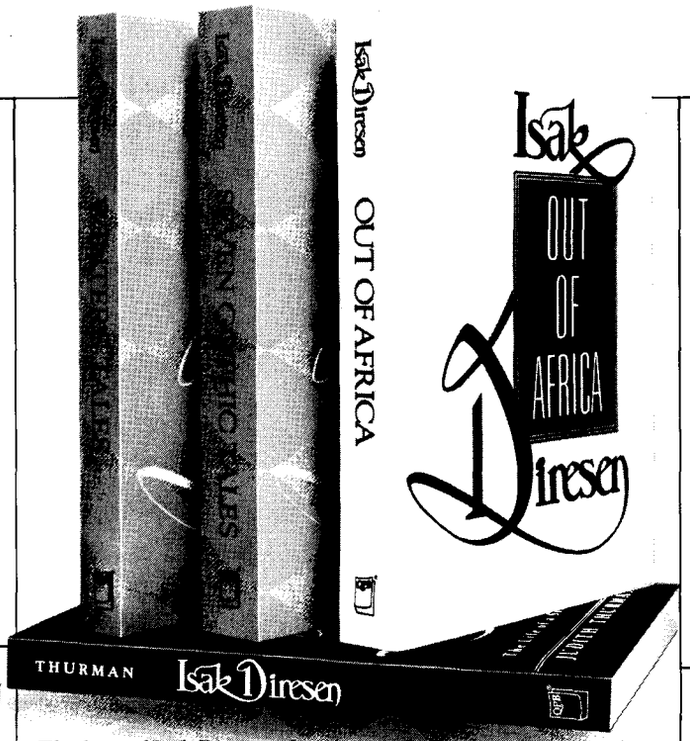

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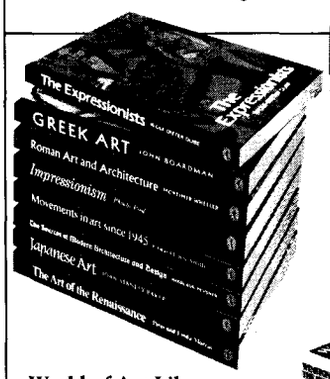

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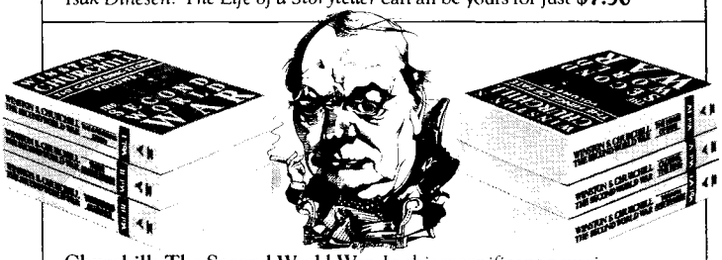

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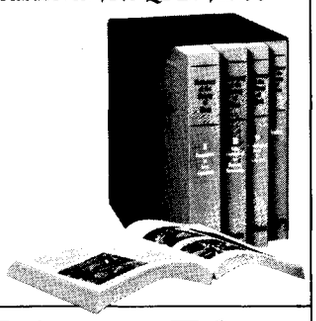

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CORRESPONDENCE

QUALIFYING TORTURE

To the editors:

In M.P.'s Washington Diarist of May 19 ("Special Dispensations"), he confuses the definitions of different kinds of torture. He equates "psychological torture" with "white torture." That is not the way in which we use the term *torture blanche* in our latest Nicaragua report. We think psychological torture is torture. *Torture blanche* is something different: harsh interrogation techniques and conditions of imprisonment that do not quite rise to the level of torture.

M.P. is also wrong on the facts. In the case of Chile, we refer in much detail to techniques of torture that in most cases involve both physical and psychological torture applied to the same person. In those cases where only psychological torture is applied, still the techniques are so systematic and severe that they qualify as torture.

In Nicaragua there are things done as a matter of policy that we condemn. These include using very small or dark cells, sleep deprivation (prisoners are woken up in the middle of the night and interrogated for several hours), and disorienting techniques such as feeding prisoners at irregular hours.

We did find in Nicaragua cases in which the treatment went beyond this, and we included them in all our reports. These would include a beating, or a threat of execution by putting a pistol to the prisoner's temple, etc. The difference here is that these cases were isolated, happening in remote areas, and not as a matter of policy. At the same time, we know of a few cases in which the Nicaraguan authorities have investigated and prosecuted incidents like these. Under those circumstances, it is hard to make the case that these things are done pursuant to a deliberate policy.

What we call "psychological torture" in Chile is much more systematic and pervasive. It includes many cases of mock firing squads, of forcing prisoners to eat their own excrement, of making prisoners listen to the voices of their children or spouses, etc.

Thus our efforts to distinguish one pattern from the other reflects only that the facts are different. It is just too bad that it does not serve the purposes of those who need sensational accusations to justify the Reagan administration's policies. Incidentally, we are not alone in reserving the word "torture" for more severe kinds of treatment. Amnesty International agrees with us that torture is not practiced in Nicaragua. Even more significantly, the State Department, in an otherwise very biased report, had this to say: "For example, [Nicaragua's Independent Commission on Human Rights] estimates that almost all the political prisoners convicted by special Sandinista tribunals . . . were convicted by confessions which were extracted by torture *or abusive treatment that might fall technically short of torture.*"

JUAN E. MENDEZ
Director, Washington Office
Americas Watch

M.P. replies:

Mr. Mendez's letter confirms the point I made in my commentary on Americas Watch. When it comes to evaluating abuse of human rights in Nicaragua, it reveals a less critical eye than when it comes to evaluating similar abuses occurring under right-wing authoritarian regimes.

Mr. Mendez tries to draw a fine line of distinction between white torture and psychological torture. It is a distinction without a difference. According to Nicaraguans who have suffered under the Sandinistas' version, the distinction is minute. The now-exiled head of Nicaragua's Independent Commission on Human Rights, Marta Baltadono, at press conferences in New York and Washington, D.C., gave many examples of the new types of torture prisoners are being subjected to. She mentioned, for example, prisoners' testimony of simulated executions.

One prisoner recently interviewed by human rights activists related how he and others were taken from their cells early in the day, and brought to a field. They were told that they were to be executed. Security forces pointed weapons at them and prepared to fire. An officer then called a halt one moment before the would-be execution. He told them they would be killed in the evening. They remained in the field without food and water the entire day, and were then brought back to their cells. This kind of behavior matches the description of torture techniques used in Chile.

Nicaraguan prisoners have been arrested, held in captivity in small cells for days, and had their lives threatened. Such behavior, sanctioned by the authorities, is certainly torture. The practices are severe, are carried out with the permission if not orders of the authorities, and are under state sponsorship. Perhaps Mr. Mendez should ask the victims whether their travails are systematic enough to "qualify as torture."

Mr. Mendez implies that to accuse Nicaragua of using torture is meant to justify Reagan administration policies against that country. Perhaps if these practices ceased, their occurrence could not be used in a campaign against Nicaragua.

Undoubtedly Nicaragua is not yet using the techniques of torture skillfully developed in a Guatemala or a Cuba. One hopes that it never will. But to refrain from criticizing the Sandinistas will only encourage them to move further in a horrible direction. Moreover, Mr. Mendez distorts the conclusions reached and cases cited in the 1985 Amnesty International Annual Report. Readers are invited to judge this report themselves. If Mr. Mendez thinks A.I. does not enumerate horrific cases of Sandinista torture, he cannot read.

WARREN COURT KIDS

To the editors:

I nearly burst into tears reading Thomas Geoghegan's "Warren Court Children" (May 19). What pathos, what heart-wrenching drama. I would have cried, too, but I remembered that I am 35 and that all those memories of the revolution are what Wordsworth calls "whispers, which memory warehouses as a shout."

Who is kidding whom? Perhaps a handful of Joan Baez and Bob Dylan look-alikes went into law wanting to emulate Abe Lincoln. But the best of them went into it for the same reason Frank Zappa is in rock music.

MARK Y. HERRING
Bristol, Tennessee

To the editors:

I am a 22-year-old college graduate with a degree in English Lit from a "major, private university." I have noted with alarm your recent disparaging articles on both the law ("Warren Court Children") and investment banking ("Being There," May 26) professions. So I ask you, what should I do with my life? The Placement Center has been no help, and—sorry, Mr. Barnes—I don't look good in uniform. Your speedy reply would be appreciated.

MICHAEL C. SLOAN
Bloomington, Indiana

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
JUNE 16, 1986

PROTECTIONISM BY ANY OTHER NAME

Republican senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina made a particularly stupid statement recently. He defended legislation that would spare the painfully inefficient textile industry in his state from any serious competition by sharply limiting textile imports. No way am I for protectionism, Thurmond said. Perish the thought. The textile bill isn't protectionist at all. It just aims to limit imports.

The textile measure will probably die when the Senate votes August 6 on overriding President Reagan's veto. But the sentiment expressed so preposterously by Thurmond—just curbing imports, ma'am, not stooping to protectionism—lives on in Congress. It is at the root of the broad backing for the new trade bill that the Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives cobbled together, then propelled to passage on May 20 by a whopping margin of 295 to 115. Over and over and over, supporters of the legislation argued that protectionism is the furthest thing from their minds. All they want is sweeping American retaliation against countries that limit the import of U.S. goods.

Fine, except they can't have it both ways any more than Thurmond could. What they have proposed is protectionism of the most egregious and economically destructive kind. No one quibbles with the bill's ostensible goal, which is the opening of foreign markets to American-made goods. But it can't be achieved by blocking foreign imports here, especially in the crude way that the bill would require. Far from promoting freer markets in the world economy, the bill would guarantee retaliation. And by doing so, it would create its own set of economic victims.

How so? The central provision, drafted by Democratic representative Richard Gephardt of Missouri, would force countries with supposedly excessive trade surpluses with the U.S. to trim the deficit by ten percent annually for four years. If they won't comply voluntarily, the president would be compelled to reduce their shipments here through higher tariffs and quotas. This is draconian stuff, and it would immediately affect Japan, Taiwan, and West Germany. These countries would have to respond quickly, and this would keep them from increasing American imports as way to comply. Arrangements for the sale of more American goods take time. Thus, the offending countries would be left with one option: cut their exports to the U.S. They would likely take retaliatory steps by reducing, not increasing, American imports. The victims would begin to pile up—first, American consumers, who would pay more with fewer goods available, then a new bloc of jobless from defunct industries that relied on the export market.

There are other provisions that are almost as bad as Gephardt's. One would make presidential action against countries with "unfair" trade practices—subsidized exports, for example—mandatory. No more could the administration negotiate a solution, one that might avert retaliation against U.S. trade regulations alleged to be unfair. The bill would also permit American firms to block imports by claiming that the foreign competition doesn't honor "workers' rights." It ought to be clear from these provisions that the real intent of the bill is not to open foreign markets, but to close *American* markets to foreign imports. You only have to look at which industries are lobbying for the bill to know this is true. It's the industries facing stiff foreign competition, not those groping for overseas markets.

Democrats are succumbing to the temptation of special-interest politics. Actually, a lot of Republicans are too, since 59 of them voted for the House bill. There's a special illusion to this sort of politics. In pushing for protectionism (while calling it something else), Democrats can point to very visible jobs that they'll save in specific industries in specific congressional districts. And just in time for the 1986 elections. But the jobs lost in other industries won't be as visible, and they'll be spread around the country. The upside is visible, the downside isn't. That makes for instant political gratification, but bad economics.

Among Democrats, there are villains and heroes in the protectionism fight. The chief villain is Gephardt, a man whose hunger for the presidency is palpable. He gave up too soon on tax reform, writing it off as a dead issue, and turned to protectionism as his demagogic ticket to national stardom. Gephardt characterizes the trade bill in Orwellian fashion. It's the Trade Expansion Act, according to the Democratic Leadership Council, of

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which he is chairman. Yep, and the MX is a Peacemaker.

On the other hand, Democratic senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey didn't give up on the tax-reform bill that he and Gephardt sponsored. He's pushing a facsimile of it into law, while opposing protectionism. An even stronger voice against the trade bill is Democratic senator Gary Hart of Colorado, who has something to lose. Hart wants to be president, and he won't please some Democratic interest groups with his full-throated opposition. Hart says the legislation is a snake-oil concoction of old-fashioned protectionism plus pop industrial policy. If his presidential chances dim, Hart will at least have the comfort of knowing that on this issue he was dead right.

HAND JIVE

Hands Across America was three-parts hype to one-part idealism. That's not a bad ratio, given the bad name idealism has come to have in the eighties. But it easily can be improved upon. It needn't take a slick media event and big corporate sponsors to rouse popular feelings of generosity. In fact, these impulses, all but ignored amid the vogue of Reaganism, are there waiting to be given a nationwide voice. Bruce Springsteen's hugely popular "Born in the U.S.A." concert tour last summer, with his combination of patriotism and sympathy for the down-and-out, was one indication. Hands Across America was another demonstration of the continuing appeal of national pride based not on Ramboism but on compassion. It revealed the widespread desire to celebrate not the fantasies of the wealthy few but the solidarity of all Americans.

What is disheartening is that so few Democrats and liberals have found a way to give political expression to these impulses. Here's where the corrosive role of the three-parts hype comes in. First, in order to secure the big corporate sponsors, HAA had to be packaged as a corporate ad campaign complete with T-shirts and jingle. Inevitably, the issues of hunger and homelessness were depoliticized in the process. Even Ronald Reagan—who only the week before had told a group of high school students that if people in America were hungry, it was only due to their own ignorance—stepped out of the White House and joined hands with the demonstrators. Doubtless he was happy enough to do so. His gesture encouraged the notion that the impulse behind HAA is one better left out of the "hardheaded" issues of government. In fact, government—not a gaggle of media-savvy organizers and Hollywood stars—is the social institution best able to really help the poor and the dispossessed in this country.

Second, the HAA organizers are almost certainly exaggerating the extent to which the event met their fund-raising goals. Their refusal to provide any estimate of the net proceeds raises suspicions. ("It may take as long as most of the summer" to come up with a figure, they say.) With a big and well-paid staff, HAA probably spent millions to raise a few more million. Worthwhile, to be sure, but self-defeating if the public gets the impression that the problem is now taken care of. The hungry and homeless need jobs and housing and a host of other social services, not merely a onetime charitable donation.

Third, HAA's successful pursuit of adulatory press coverage is shortsighted. Seldom have journalists been so effectively stampeded into cheerleading for a cause. From the gushing coverage of the event, you'd never know that HAA failed dismally in its attempt to reach its goal of five million participants. Even the *New York Times* wrongly reported that there were "few breaks" in the cross-country human chain. Who wanted to hear about the tourist stop on the Arizona-New Mexico border where only a dozen of 4,000 expected hand-holders showed up? The truth is that the line was mostly breaks. Here in Washington, D.C., the chain didn't even make it across the heavily populated neighborhood of Cleveland Park. The conventional wisdom has it that perception is reality, but realities have a way of catching up with perceptions. People will inevitably resent being manipulated by the media, even in the service of a good cause.

Avoiding the politics of hunger and homelessness is especially misguided today because the country seems to be getting ready for another assault on its poverty problem. The plight of the black underclass has received unprecedented attention, and the old conservative dogma that only prosperity can help the poor has been discredited. In an era when Ronald Reagan and the Republican Senate have taken the lead in fulfilling the ancient liberal dream of tax reform, progress can come from any quarter. Democrats and liberals should take it upon themselves to constructively channel the amorphous goodwill that was so evident last Sunday. In the case of tax reform, it wasn't self-congratulatory proclamations of compassion that effectively eliminated taxation of poor people and removed wealthy businesses from the corporate welfare rolls. It was the willingness to sacrifice individual advantages for the common good, based on the notion that equity and efficiency can reinforce each other. These are the principles that can give the Democrats a clear and progressive identity, and could help make the next war on poverty more successful than the last. They were the principles conspicuously absent from the Hands Across America celebration.

NOTEBOOK

□ THE WALL: With this year's observance of Memorial Day, there can be no doubt that the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., has become an American institution. Now known in the popular imagination as The Wall, the memorial has the astonishing capacity to speak to the deepest and most complex emotions about the war, the heroism and the waste, the idealism and the stupidity. It has inspired spontaneous rituals of sorrow, remembrance, and tribute. Visitors trace the names of the dead carved in

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the black marble. Some have committed suicide in front of it; a few have gotten married there. Thousands leave mementos of their loved ones at the base of the wall: a photograph, a baseball, a sweater. This outpouring, which few could have predicted, has disproved the right-wing criticism of the memorial's design. With much denunciation of artistic elitism, these critics denigrated Maya Lin's design as "Jane Fonda's ditch." They said they wanted a memorial that was more heroic, more honorable, more realistic. But the success of The Wall has shown that it was the critics who were the tiny Washington-based elite. It was the self-proclaimed spokesmen for "the people" who believed Americans did not want and could not handle anything more than the recycled sentimentalities of past memorials. These critics are now quiet, persuaded at last by the power of art.

A docufantasy.

On Wings Of Turkeys

WHILE NEW REPUBLIC readers spent their evenings engaged in elevated pursuits, NBC recently consecrated five prime-time hours, over two nights, to presenting a docufantasy titled "On Wings of Eagles," the straightforward story of how a painfully plain and patriotic Texas billionaire, H. Ross Perot, rescued two of his E.D.S. Corporation employees from the dungeons of revolutionary Iran. As cinema, this made-for-television movie ought to have been called "On Wings of Turkeys." But as an example of the public veneration of rich men, it rivals the Gilded Age's crudest and most worshipful effusions on behalf of men of wealth and the good they do. Since E.D.S., which Perot founded with $1,000 in 1962, doesn't deal directly with the public, people are somewhat vague about how this little man with a big swagger got so rich. Reaganite businessman that he is, Perot did it by getting contracts from state governments to administer their Medicare and Medicaid programs, inspiring *Ramparts*, the glossy, left magazine of the turbulent protest years, to mock him as "America's first welfare billionaire."

No amount of jeering has cost this caricature of a nouveau riche blowhard his full meed of public adulation. Many words of praise were spoken on behalf of his rich self when Perot bought a copy of the Magna Carta and dropped it off at the National Archives. But what put him in the eccentric millionaire's hall of fame was his arrival in 1969 in southeast Asia with 26 tons of Christmas gifts for American prisoners of war in North Vietnam.

Being truly rich enables a person to hire somebody to do anything. What you can't do you can imagine you did and then you can get somebody to write it up. Perot got writer Ken Follett to turn this improbable yarn into a best-selling book of what is alleged to be nonfiction. It wasn't long before the suspect exploits of the heroic half-pint from Dallas were dramatized by a television network. This beats anything they did in the Gilded Age.

Andrew Mellon and Jay Cook—masters at buying favors from the press—would have envied Perot his luck at being able to use television to display his worldly goods. Some of the scenes in the show were even shot in his office with the Frederic Remington cowboy bronzes and the "Spirit of '76" painting over the fireplace. They would have admired Perot's success in depicting himself as a corporate boardroom military hero and patriot.

And their eyes would have popped at this story of a corporation full of Rambo-esque executives who, on the boss's merest suggestion, toss away their attaché cases, do six days of basic training at the country club, and then, automatic weapons at the ready, fly off to Persia to take on hordes of not very bright Moslem fundamentalists who run around the TV screens shouting, "Seize them, you fools!" in Parsi. If this small band of root'em-toot'em executives were able to accomplish what the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps couldn't for our hostages in the American Embassy, you have to remember that the armed forces were working under the handicap of having Jimmy Carter for a commander in chief while the E.D.S. irregulars were working under the leadership of H. Ross Perot, the little Napoleon of business, the armed and battle-ready tycoon.

'Tis a thrilling story, and a moving one. The brave little hairy-chested guy is played by Richard Crenna. He goes to his dying mother before he leaves, and tells her: "I won't be but a jiffy over there in Eye-ran, Momma, but I gotta do this for America." She replies to her best-born, "I know you do, son, you take as much time as you need to rescue all your vice presidents and bring 'em on home to Dallas." Doing a wheelie on her hospital gurney, she adds, "I won't die while you're away, H. Ross, I promise."

CUT TO THE Tehran Hilton, where a pride of E.D.S. eagles is ordering room service and getting its marching orders from a retired army colonel (played by Burt Lancaster). Ole Ross, meanwhile, waxes patriotic and waits on the Turkish border for his fledglings to come out. Cut back to Tehran to see the colonel tell a couple of the eagles that they should finish their club sandwiches, get in the back of the chauffeured Mercedes, and make another reconnaissance run over to the jail, where the gimlet-eyed religious fanatics have their two fellow E.D.S. executives locked up. Well, sort of locked up, because the outside E.D.S. people seem to be able to visit the imprisoned E.D.S. people anytime, day or night, and debrief them on the jail's weak points.

This is all supposed to have really happened. But my God, those Iranians are dumb, and they all have big, bulbous noses, and none of 'em shave except for one snub-nosed pretty youth, a Santa Monica-type Iranian. This gung ho puppy, this kid, Rashid, is also

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the only raghead in the picture E.D.S. can trust.

Under Burt Lancaster's general supervision, Rashid breaks the two E.D.S. executives out of the pokey and leads them across the wild mountains toward Turkey and Uncle Ross, but they don't make it over the finish line as easily as that. Up in the mountains they get stopped by the Kurds, who seem to be both Communists and Islamic fundamentalists, but they're rescued by the Wheys or some other such tribe. They make good their escape, although not before one satisfying scene in which Burt Lancaster picks up a sackful of hand grenades and kicks some Iranian ass. Uncle Ross, who is definitely one American who won't stand there and take it, leads everybody, including Sabu, back to Dallas. Fade-out with a super on the screen reading Eagles 50, Ragheads zero.

If you're puzzled about how E.D.S. has recruited executives who shoot as accurately as they sign off on interoffice memorandums, the dialogue in Perot's red, white, and blue docufantasy tips us off. "Eagles don't flock. You have to find them one at a time," quoth the leader, who is some kind of strange bird himself. There is much swashbuckling eagle talk through all five of the program's hours. What there was very little of were choruses of catcalls and Bronx cheers from the TV critics. Perhaps the atmosphere in the big media corporation newsrooms discouraged mocking CEOs in full battle feather, soaring in lonely flight.

Bernard Baruch, a multimillionaire Wall Street stock speculator, who came to Washington during the First World War as a volunteer government administrator, managed with the aid of a pliably gullible press to turn himself into the nation's official wise old man. Until his death in 1965, several generations of Americans had become accustomed to seeing pictures of the adviser to presidents, the ancient American sage, seated on a bench in Lafayette Park, the very epitome of experience and knowledge. But Baruch was never the hero of his own made-for-TV movie. So what if the goddamn eagle laid an egg?

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

Medicare's road to recovery.

OFF THE RESPIRATOR

MEDICARE IS THE the rare program that has created problems by succeeding. Its point, of course, was to ensure a minimum standard of health care for elderly Americans, regardless of financial means. It fully achieved that purpose. But the program's founders didn't give much thought to the likely fiscal and economic consequences of turning the federal government into the nation's biggest purchaser of medical treatment. Before Medicare, the market for medical goods and services was essentially a private one. Today it is dominated by the federal government. How the program is managed affects not only the treatment received by the elderly and the costs borne by the taxpayer, but the shape of the entire medical industry.

From the beginning, Medicare was run without much regard to cost. It was the domestic policy equivalent of defense procurement. Doctors and hospitals were expected to provide whatever treatment they thought was needed, and in return the government paid their costs, with a margin for profit included in the case of for-profit facilities—a duplicate of the familiar cost-plus weapons contract. The result was the same: where costs are ignored, they usually expand rapidly. Almost immediately Medicare found its expenses overwhelming predictions. In 1970 Medicare spent $13 billion. By 1981 the cost was $73 billion. Payroll taxes had to be raised accordingly. The effects, however, went beyond the impact on the hospital trust fund. A more serious result was price inflation for all types of medical care, well outrunning inflation levels in the rest of the economy. Between 1970 and 1980, the share of the nation's income going to pay for medical goods and services climbed by 24 percent. Some of this was the result of benign forces—such as higher living standards, which led to a greater demand for health care, and more sophisticated technology, some of which was available only at a high price—but much of it can be ascribed to federal programs.

By 1983 it was clear that something had to change, and at the Reagan administration's behest it finally did. The remedy was simple and dramatic: price controls or, in the administration's nomenclature, a "prospective payment system" for hospital care. The new system assigned every ailment requiring hospital treatment to one of 468 categories known as "diagnostic related groups" and decreed the amount the government would pay for each one. A hospital that admitted a Medicare patient was obliged to treat him or her, and in return it would be reimbursed a fixed amount depending on the ailment. In effect, the administration told hospitals that it would no longer concern itself with their costs. Those were now the hospitals' problem. If they could treat the particular ailment for less than the allowed sum, within accepted medical guidelines, they would get to keep the difference. If their expenses exceeded the limit, the loss would be theirs. The hope was that hospitals would respond to the new incentives by eliminating unnecessary care and boosting productivity.

EVEN THE administration didn't foresee how drastically hospitals would change their behavior. The average length of time Medicare patients spent in the hospital, which was 10.32 days in 1982, dropped to 8.38 by 1985, a decline of 19 percent. Total admissions, which some experts expected to rise, fell by nearly five percent during the same period. The House Ways and Means Committee estimates that the new system will save the hospital trust fund about two billion dollars this year. That has contributed to

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a distinct improvement in the financial outlook of the hospital trust fund. In 1982, according to the "mid-range" economic forecast (neither the most optimistic nor the most pessimistic), the fund was projected to run dry by 1987. In the latest forecast, using the same assumptions, it is expected to remain solvent until 1996.

Here too the impact goes beyond Medicare. Occupancy rates in community hospitals last year were at their lowest level on record. Their total employment, which had been rising briskly, has edged downward. In 1984, for the first time in memory, the share of national income going to pay for health care declined. These changes are not solely due to the efficiencies of the new system. Private companies and their insurers also have been taking overdue measures to restrain medical expenditures. But none of them has had as much effect as Medicare.

More surprising yet, hospitals didn't suffer from the new cost constraints. Just the opposite: profit margins and total profits actually rose. The American Hospital Association, which represents most of the nation's nonprofit community hospitals, says 1984 was the most profitable year on record for its members, and 1985 was nearly as good. The apparent reason is that the new system has suddenly shifted power from doctors, who had always resisted cost-cutting measures in favor of using every available means that might help the patient, to administrators, who had been trying for decades to introduce basic economies. Now physicians whose methods are unduly expensive find themselves under considerable pressure from hospital managers to change.

THERE HAS BEEN some grumbling, and not only from doctors. The Senate Special Committee on Aging, chaired by Pennsylvania Republican John Heinz, issued a report last fall complaining that Medicare patients are being discharged "sicker and quicker," leading to some unnecessary complications and even occasional deaths. Independent experts aren't so sure. Dennis O'Leary, president of the Joint Committee on Accreditation, which sets and monitors standards of care at some 5,000 hospitals, says the new reimbursement scheme has "fundamental imperfections," but says he is "not absolutely persuaded that we have a serious problem" in the quality of treatment for Medicare patients. Brookings Institution economist Henry Aaron, who specializes in health care, says that the evidence of a deterioration in the quality of care is inconclusive. The popularity of medical malpractice lawsuits ought to dampen the inclination to take the risk of sending a patient home before it is medically safe to do so.

Nonetheless, the fears about excessive cost-cutting aren't groundless. The administration's theory is that, given a fee intended to reflect the average cost of treating a specific ailment, hospitals will be happy to treat more costly patients as well as less costly ones, since the differences will average out to a reasonable return. This is a triumph of hope over economics. Assuming the government's fee limits are set at a fair level, hospitals will be able to make money overall even if some of their patients have to be treated at a loss. But they will be able to make even more if they can avoid or undertreat the more costly Medicare patients. At a time when overcapacity and competitive pressure have produced a surge of hospital closings, no administrator can afford to ignore that incentive.

The prospective payment system also suffers from the inherent defects of any government-decreed price schedule. One is the difficulty of establishing the right price. If it was beyond the government's powers to find, for a handful of types of crude oil, a level that would ensure an adequate return to producers while protecting consumers from excessive costs, it isn't likely that the Department of Health and Human Services can discern the right price for each of nearly 500 conditions afflicting victims of widely varying physical vitality, medical history, and age. Even within each category, the ailments are likely to vary considerably; no two gallbladders are exactly alike. The sheer complexity of the scheme is bound to foster "category creep," as hospitals look for ways to upgrade ailments in order to earn higher payments—particularly in what look like expensive cases. They also are under pressure to find ways to circumvent the fee limits, such as treating some problems before admission. Eventually these latent flaws are bound to impair the program's operation.

ALTHOUGH THE price-control approach corrected the worst failings of the cost-plus system, it isn't a permanent solution. What is needed is a scheme that more accurately replicates a competitive market. One promising idea is already getting a tryout. In 1982 Congress allowed Medicare beneficiaries to abandon the old fee-for-service arrangement in favor of enrolling in health maintenance organizations, better known as HMOs. For each enrollee, the government pays the HMO 95 percent of the average beneficiary's annual expense to Medicare. The HMO, in return, is obliged to provide all needed care, including hospitalization, regardless of cost. Since the option became available in February 1985, 597,000 recipients have taken it, and the number is growing at a rate of five to eight percent per month. The administration, which originated the idea, is now pushing a bill sponsored by Senator Dave Durenberger, a Minnesota Republican, that would relax the restrictions in the existing law to allow more providers to compete for the favor of Medicare beneficiaries, such as Blue Cross-Blue Shield and hospital-sponsored plans.

The attractions of this new competitive strategy are obvious. It creates the same incentives for efficiency as the prospective payment system, because providers make money only if they can furnish treatment for less than the amount they get from Medicare. Since they are responsible for each patient's overall health, rather than just a particular transient condition, they have additional incentives—to offer preventive care, to address potentially serious problems early, and to encourage patients to avoid unhealthy habits such as smoking. As one expert puts it,

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"You want them to look at a patient as a patient, not as a kidney or a heart." Unlike hospitals, HMOs and other entrants into this market will be able to pursue efficiencies across the whole spectrum of care—substituting outpatient treatment for hospital care, for instance, which can yield large savings at no risk to the patient, and controlling the care provided to patients once they leave the hospital. At the same time, this method substantially diminishes the incentive to undertreat. Any provider that hopes to attract customers will have to offer a competitive standard of care. Those that fail to satisfy their patients will lose them. The only flaw is the problem of "adverse selection," in which providers try to avoid enrolling potentially expensive patients. It might be overcome, though, by classifying beneficiaries according to their risk and varying payments accordingly, to ensure that providers can make money on each patient.

The inexorable aging of the American populace means that even drastic measures won't be able to prevent a growing share of the national income from being spent on medical care. But by establishing incentives to pare unnecessary expenses while preserving a reasonable standard of treatment, the federal government can do a lot to keep the trend within tolerable bounds. It has already made a good start. The powerful simplicity of the reimbursement approach adopted in 1983 served to alter sharply the behavior of hospitals. But its simplicity means that sooner or later it will become either tyrannical, with price ceilings set so low as to endanger the sick, or impotent, as doctors and administrators find ways around them. A more supple and durable remedy is to replace government decrees with market pressures. By stimulating greater competition in an industry that has had far too little, Medicare can improve not only its balance sheet but the system of health care.

STEPHEN CHAPMAN

Stephen Chapman is a syndicated columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*.

THE PRESS

CELEBRITY SWEEPSTAKES

COME EARLY Friday evening, I can invariably be found in front of my TV set. Cocktail receptions and book parties, dinners and drinks—I now decline all invitations that might keep me from watching Friday's news. That's when ABC reveals its "Person of the Week"—the individual who "made the difference" during the week's events. A gritty congressman fighting the political battle of his life? A statesman risking his career on a bold new initiative? A diligent doctor who's uncovered a new enzyme, perhaps, or an aging athlete who can still hit in the clutch? Only Peter Jennings knows for sure.

Introduced on March 21, "Person of the Week" is ABC's answer to a perennial network problem: low Friday ratings. As the workweek comes to a close and people prepare to party, viewership for the nightly newscasts regularly takes a plunge. How to arrest it? "Person of the Week." The teasers begin with the Brinkley show on Sunday and continue without letup throughout the week: "Every Friday, ABC Chooses a Person of the Week. . . . Who It Is May Surprise You." Day by day the tension mounts, so that by Friday, ABC hopes, millions of Americans will quickly quaff their beers and hurry home to learn who's made the difference this week.

IF ALL GOES according to plan, guessing the person of the week could become a national pastime. Worried about looking foolish as friends make educated guesses? Help is on the way with this handy "Person of the Week Viewing Guide."

The Log Cabin Principle. No matter how prominent they've become, POTWs almost always hail from humble roots. Ethnic neighborhoods, hardworking parents, poverty—all are definite pluses. Examples: George Wallace, selected for retiring from politics, is the "first child of an Alabama dirt farmer." Admiral Frank Kelso, commander of the warships that crossed Libya's Line of Death, "grew up in Fayetteville, Tennessee, where Andrew Jackson formed up his troops before marching to the battle of New Orleans, where the stock is sturdy and reliant and very far from the sea." And Tip O'Neill, selected for making a difference on the *contra* aid vote, is "the son of an immigrant Irish bricklayer, . . . a man who . . . has never forgotten his Boston Irish roots. . . ."

It's a Man's World. POTWs are almost always men (nine of the first ten choices). What's more, they are usually the type of man who can be described as ". . . a man who . . ." Thus, Wayne LaPierre, head of the gun lobby on Capitol Hill, is "a man who is proud of the power he wields." Bob Packwood, drafter of the Senate tax bill, is "a man who has been converted on the subject of taxes." And Vladimir Horowitz, selected the week of his return to the Soviet Union, "is a man who says [his] message is only the music, nothing else."

". . . Yes, But He Has a Wonderful Personality. . . . " POTWs can have flaws, but only if they conceal hidden virtues. Thus, a colleague of Frank Kelso observes that the admiral has a "demanding personality"; lest this leave the impression that he is a royal pain in the ass, however, we are told that Kelso is "never more demanding of his subordinates than he is of himself." Bob Packwood is regarded as "something of a wheeler-dealer," but since this makes him sound like a slick operator, we are informed that "he is a good mediator in bringing people together," a man who "above all . . . enjoys the practice of politics." Dr. Robert Gale, a bone marrow specialist who operated on Chernobyl radiation victims, once received a reprimand for experi-

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menting on people without federal approval; to a layman this sounds rather ominous, but fortunately Peter Jennings is there to assure us that "his associates attribute the episode to the zeal for saving lives."

A Way with Words. POTWs are usually capable of shameless self-justification. Perhaps the best example was offered by Bob Packwood. ABC selected Packwood for writing "a tax-reform bill which has ignited the public's imagination." There was only one problem. For years, the Oregon senator had a reputation as a trusted friend of special interests; in fact, only weeks before his selection, he had presided over a mind-boggling series of tax giveaways. How to explain the sudden conversion to reform? "The change," Packwood confides, "came when I looked at that list of witnesses, not rereading their testimony, just getting the witness list and going down it with my finger, and I thought, this is ridiculous—every single group has some preference, and wouldn't we be better off if we could eliminate almost all the preferences?"

NOW, THIS MAY seem a bit farfetched. Where was he when that witness list was being drawn up—off playing golf with some CEOs? Did his about-face have anything to do, perhaps, with the outpouring of negative publicity prompted by his earlier bill? We'll never know, because POTWs are never asked such questions. Instead, as boyhood photos flash on the screen, Peter Jennings informs us that "he was born in Portland, Oregon. . . ."

Drum-Beaters. POTWs generally reaffirm the virtues of the American way. The more an individual helps promote nationalist themes, the more chance he or she has to be a POTW. Thus, on the Friday after U.S. warplanes bombed Libya, ABC selected Margaret Thatcher. "Without her," said Peter Jennings, "those F-111 aircraft would not have done their job on Libyan targets."

Chernobyl posed a bigger challenge. Finding a candidate who could illustrate the superiority of American values was not easy, given that the accident took place in the Soviet Union. In the end, ABC came through brilliantly. There was a slight catch, however: the POTW died 150 years ago. This might well perplex neophytes, so here's a look at how the selection process unfolded. The time is late Thursday night:

Anchor: "Damn! It's getting late. Anyone got a candidate?"

Executive producer: "How about a radiation victim—someone from simple Cossack roots?"

Producer: "Sorry, we don't have any good footage."

Executive producer: "How about a Swedish scientist, one of the fellows who first discovered the accident?"

Anchor: "I don't think so. Swedes don't come from ethnic neighborhoods. Any Americans?"

Executive producer: "What about James Madison?"

Anchor: "James who?"

Executive producer: "James Madison."

Anchor: "Is he with the International Atomic Energy Commission?"

Executive producer: "James Madison, the fourth president of the United States. A brilliant, soft-spoken man from solid Virginia stock who helped draft the Bill of Rights."

Anchor: "The man who wrote the language about freedom of the press? The man who laid the foundations for our unfettered Fourth Estate, which, as Chernobyl proves, makes our country so much better than Russia? Boy, he really did make a difference. Let's go with it."

Producer: "I think I could get Benno Schmidt and Arthur Schlesinger to offer some stirring words about the role of the Constitution."

Executive producer: "Just one thing. What about all those press accounts claiming up to 2,000 dead . . . ?"

Anchor: "Hey, lighten up. It's Friday. I'm sure they'll love it."

Love it they did. "We've gotten the most mail on the James Madison segment," an ABC spokesman told me. Viewers "thought it was terrific. They wrote in about how no one in their family got it." Goodness—weren't they reading their newspapers?

The Madison segment illustrates the greatest strength of "Person of the Week." It's able to make everyone seem larger than life—even when they're dead. From pianists to prime ministers, senators to surgeons, ABC simply wraps its subjects in the soft gauze of celebrityhood. I await the week when some spectacular hijacking or bombing results in the selection of a really notorious POTW. I can hear it now: "He was born to humble parents in a Tripoli neighborhood. . . ."

MICHAEL MASSING

Michael Massing wrote "Upside Down in Angola" in the March 3 issue of TNR.

China's 'cure' for socialism.

PENNY CAPITALISM

Sichuan

A freshly painted announcement in the middle of Chongqing, a city of hills and ferries and fog, once Chiang Kai-shek's wartime capital, proclaims: "Our company, noting that Chongqing's bus service is inadequate, has obtained new vehicles from Japan, with very soft and comfortable seats, and we are starting to offer buses to the following places . . ." Such private service companies flourish under China's new economic policies. "Test our service," the announcement ends, and that is just the mood of the Chinese consumer, for whom a choice of products and services is a welcome novelty.

In Chengdu, the Sichuan capital, my driver parks the Toyota by a billboard that reads: LEAVE HOME FOR WORK HAPPILY, RETURN HOME FROM WORK SAFELY. It

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used to urge: CARRY THROUGH REVOLUTION TO THE END.

Balconies are festooned with rust-colored peppers suspended on hooks and clothes drying on sticks. Below them is a flurry of salesmanship. Vendors are eager to sell me everything from the green vegetable *qing cai* to life insurance, toy telephones, and gaudy glazed tiles that reflect a widespread zeal to upgrade one's apartment. Skinned rabbits hang in pathetic stiffness on hooks in the open air. "Buy one, they're cheap," says a grinning boy, promoting his wares as no one does in the half-empty state shops behind the rows of newly built private stalls. Rakish young men in Sichuan-style mustaches and caps worn jauntily at an angle sell black-market cigarettes, successfully driving a rapier of private commerce through the ribs of a ponderous supply mechanism that lags eternally behind demand. Among the movies advertised on the billboards are *Pink Skirts in the Street*, *You Can Get Rich*, *Jade Butterfly*, and *Gypsy Boy*.

Here is a photocopy shop, its subversive possibilities forgotten in the rush to satisfy the market. "I wasn't earning enough at my factory job," the proprietor explains, "so I managed to buy a secondhand machine through a friend in a government unit." Copies are 20 cents. People bring job applications, wills, draft contracts, sample exam answers.

A line of people of all ages inches forward to buy lottery tickets. I jostle into position and buy my ticket for 60 cents. This is no small affair: my number is above one million. "First prize is a motorbike," says the attendant, looking very pleased. "The next four lucky numbers receive a 20-inch color TV."

All of this is exciting to one whose China trips used to consist of nodding with glazed eyes at sermons of political rectitude and dodging arrows of "anti-imperialist" indignation.

THE COUNTRYSIDE of Sichuan, China's most populous province, with 104 million people, is just as business-minded as the cities. On a drive from Chengdu toward Mount Omei, a famous Buddhist retreat, the narrow, twisting road is alive with commerce. A faded but still-legible sign is painted in white characters on a decrepit barn: IN AGRICULTURE LEARN FROM DAZHAI. For all its relevance now, it might as well be an ad for a New York nightclub. Equality and collective responsibility, the crown jewels of the Dazhai "model," are relics of a mocked past. Today's watchwords are initiative, profit, and *inequality*. If some get rich first, the government argues, others will be able to follow.

I meet one farmer who has grown so wealthy from growing potted plants that he has beggars at his gate. He has just donated 10,000 yuan ($4,000) to the local school system. I meet another newly rich farmer, Mr. Ge Ji, a small sharp-featured man with quick gestures, in a village of the Yi race in southern Sichuan. "Are you the richest man in Zhaojue?" I ask him. "One of the richest," he says with a grin. Ge runs a brick and tile kiln that was handed over to him after it went broke as a state-run unit. This made him a "specialized household"—essentially a family business.

We sit in the living room of his large, mud-walled, tiled home, which like most Yi houses has no windows. In the manner of Yi hospitality, he fetches beer and boiled eggs. Last year Ge and his household of six people took in 32,000 yuan ($12,800), a sevenfold increase over 1982. Net profit was 11,800 yuan, after paying 9,500 yuan to his 34 employees and other outlays—no tax. "Mr. Ge, you've done well, and the government is pleased with you," I say. "Wouldn't China be better off if all the villages moved to a specialized household pattern?"

"If 80 percent did," he replies, "China could become prosperous."

THE POST-MAO rulers of Sichuan, who are proud that Deng Xiaoping is Sichuanese, and who point out that the present Chinese premier, Zhao Ziyang, formerly party boss of Sichuan, worked out many of China's reforms on Sichuan soil, are staking the political, social, even cultural future of the province on what the governor sums up for me as a "shift from a self-sufficient to a commercial economy."

There are two main innovations: the mechanism of prices takes the place of some aspects of the previous planning system; and economic units (especially in the countryside) have much more responsibility for choosing what they will produce, husbanding resources, and marketing products. The result is not capitalism—the means of production are not in private hands—but a state-sponsored commercialization. Will the changes stick? Unfortunately, tokenism seems built into the reforms, and market freedoms are being used to shore up a fundamentally antimarket system.

In Chongqing, I chat with an executive of Min Sheng shipping, a revival of a famous pre-Liberation company whose assets were confiscated by the Communists in 1954. "State-owned shipping companies are jealous of us," Mr. Luo tells me, drumming his fingers on a cluttered desk overlooking the Yangzi River. "Sometimes they even try to sabotage us."

Min Sheng has been extremely successful over the past year, and it is expanding like bamboo after spring rain. "We're starting passenger service on the Yangzi," Luo says, referring to the long haul of nearly 2,000 kilometers downstream to Shanghai. "At present, buying boat tickets is hard and slow. We're going to sell tickets by mail. We also found out people don't like having to eat on the floor. On our boats, food will be taken to your seat or compartment. Our boat staff will be trained in a special school."

To a degree, the more successful the new Min Sheng company is, the greater will be its vulnerability. I ask Mr. Luo if he could be confiscated again. "No, now we are so small," he replies. But what if Min Sheng grows large again?

In Xichang, a warm, flower-bedecked city in southern Sichuan, two businesswomen, Chen and Zhou, aged 17 and 20, sit me down in their tiny but thriving shop on a tree-lined street. They were unable to find jobs on leaving

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high school. Their solution is "Overseas Chinese Fashion Store," which is full of dresses, rings, and scarves that the proud vendors call "trendy [*shi mao*]."

"Being unemployed is awful," says Zhou, who has painted fingernails and a stylish hairdo. "I hated being dependent on my parents."

"Five of us got together," Chen explains. "An old retired man, two younger men who have other jobs as well, and us two." All five are from families with relatives abroad, and no doubt gained business acumen from their upbringing.

"Our capital was 40,000 yuan ($16,000) when we started last year," Chen continues. "In the first full year we had 7,000 yuan sales and 1,000 yuan profit—70 percent of that goes for our wages." The government has offered them free rent and electricity and no taxes for three years.

I asked her if there is any danger that policies might turn against private businesses. "I don't think so. Not in the short run, anyway—you see the unemployment problem is so great, the government has to encourage such small business." Meanwhile both girls study at night in case they ever need to get into college.

Here are the limitations of Deng's reforms: Min Sheng shipping is safe only as long as it doesn't succeed too well. The two business girls are given freedom because the Communist Party doesn't know any other way to arrest severe urban unemployment.

AT TIMES THE Communist leaders speak as if scales had just fallen from their eyes. "We made housing a *welfare industry*," cries the governor of Sichuan, "whereas it should be profitable." The mayor of Chongqing sounds like a Texas tycoon railing against too much government regulation: "Rents are too low! There's no incentive to construct housing. Goodness, would *you* build new apartments in Chongqing if it takes, as it would take given present rentals, more than 100 years to recover your investment?" "Look," says Lin Ling, a leading research economist in Chengdu, in a tone of exasperation, "we aren't concerned with the exact differences between socialism and capitalism—we just want economic progress."

Other results of the commercialization of Sichuan are less expected than the undoubted if modest increases in efficiency and prosperity. Public services sag in the countryside. "No one wants to be a teacher anymore," a teacher laments to me. "My three children are interested only in a business career." The decline of political supervision—excellent for economic life—opens the door to crime and delinquency.

The two biggest problems are that politics tugs against economics, and that in China there are simply too many people. The logic of the economic reforms requires an autonomy for the economic sphere. But the Communist guardians fear this would chip away at their political power. "Economic autonomy" means nothing if the central ministries insist on fixing prices, as they sometimes do. Marxist ideas have faded, but the monopoly on power of the Leninist Party has not—so politics, if not a very ideological politics, still dominates every realm of life.

As for the population problem, the Chinese economy has repeatedly grown at a respectable rate only to see the per capita results fall flat because of the high birth rate. Family planning is belatedly starting to take hold, but there are over 500 million more people in China today than when the Communists came to power in 1949. Sheer numbers prevent expectations' being realized, which in turn intensifies political control. The Communists take no chances with a disgruntled populace.

When Deng goes, the military—which has been left behind by the new "commercial economy"—will for a time become the cutting edge of political resistance to full-fledged economic reforms. The men and women of the gun tend to favor tradition and security and seniority—all at a discount in the post-Mao era. If the Politburo is split when Deng passes, the military will throw its considerable weight on the side of curbing the "excesses" of the economic reforms.

EVEN TODAY, and even in Sichuan, where many of the reforms began, much of the new economic activity remains "penny capitalism": a business spirit, rather than a business system. It is a mere commercial layer upon the face of an unchanged beast—Leninism—just as the boxlike stalls in the city streets are a gaudy mask of commerce hiding the skeletal line of gray stores of state socialism behind them. It seems to many thoughtful Chinese, and to me, that the government is not bent on a fundamental change of economic system, but on hanging on to its own political power by offering bread and circuses to a long-suffering people.

A clear verdict cannot yet be given, because the leaders themselves are focused on method more than on ultimate goal. The vehicle is hurtling but no one is too sure where the road leads. To be sure, Deng's people are fairly open-minded. But thus far the world has seen no case of sustained rapid economic growth under a Communist Party's auspices, or of economic change bringing about the dismantling of an established Leninist political system. "Does Deng intend the economic changes to produce political change?" I ask a Chengdu intellectual. "Look," he replies, "if he thought the economic reforms would lead to a change of the political system, he wouldn't have unleashed those reforms."

My try at the lottery in Chengdu was aborted. Before it was time for the draw, the government came out with some new regulations. "Units are using lotteries to make unreasonable profits," says the preamble, "which are then distributed in bonuses for themselves." It goes on to hint that lotteries are a "pollution" from the West. The lottery, like much else in Sichuan, and in the China of 81-year-old Deng Xiaoping, hangs in the balance.

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Overrated, overpaid, and over their heads.

THE MYTH OF POLITICAL CONSULTANTS

BY FRED BARNES

POLITICAL CONSULTANTS have sex in the shower with their buxom assistants. They fly around the country in plush jets, which they own. They cleverly manipulate the political system. They strip candidate after candidate of their real personalities and viewpoints, and impose phony but politically appealing new ones on them. Political consultants are almost always successful. Any candidate they're behind has a very high probability of winning, the odds being something like seven to one. Pity the poor candidate whose consultant quits on him. Forsaken by his guru, he is high and dry, and all but certain to lose.

This is the Hollywood version of political consulting in a recent film called *Power*. The consultant is played by Richard Gere, and power is what he has lots of. He is a political Svengali. Campaigns turn on his plots and ploys. Candidates are empty vessels, which he fills. Of course, Hollywood has pushed this line about political consultants before. But in *The Candidate*, a 1972 movie, the omnipotent consultant was crass, dumpy, and played by Allen Garfield, no matinee idol. The candidate was Robert Redford. By the end of the picture he'd become so dependent on his consultant that, having won the election, he asked plaintively, "What do I do now?"

Ordinarily no one believes Hollywood. But with consultants, conventional wisdom imitates art. Serious political writers exalt them just as Hollywood does. O.K., they leave out sex in the shower and the private jets. But the rest is practically the same: consultant chic. "Television and polling have bred a new profession of electronic manipulators," Arthur Schlesinger Jr. warns. Sidney Blumenthal writes in *The Permanent Campaign*, a book about the "elite" corps of operatives, that consultants "have supplanted the old party bosses" and "superseded" the parties themselves. In the May issue of *GQ*, Randall Rothenberg hails "a new breed of political insiders [who] understand the nuances and influence of their overpopulated generation [and] may well change the way American politics is conducted for decades to come." Not to be outdone, David Chagall says in *The New Kingmakers*, which should have been titled "The New Gods," that since the 1960s "a brigade of consultant superstars developed and assumed positions of unparalleled power and influence in the political structure of America." More breathless yet, Roland Perry declares in *Hidden Power*, still another book puffing up consultants, that "with their control over politicians and understanding of the new technology, it is the strategists who, more and more, will dictate the direction of nations and the world."

Wow! This takeover poses a new peril, not only to democracy but to the entire world. Don't believe a word of this. It is pure myth. Political consultants have not even seized control of American elections. They now work in every national and statewide campaign, and in many smaller races, but their effect on the outcome of elections is marginal at best. And they screw up as often as they do well. Consultants can't turn nerds into U.S. senators. They can't elect people. They can't overturn the laws of politics.

If they can't do that, what can consultants do? Lots of things. They come in four basic types—pollsters, media consultants, direct-mail experts, and strategists. The mail experts limit themselves to fund-raising. But pollsters and media consultants often double as strategists. In fact, pure strategists who don't offer other services—Republican Stuart Spencer is the most famous—are a dying breed. There's not enough money in it. To bring in big bucks, you've got to supply the TV spots. For statewide races, topflight consultants charge $30,000 to $50,000, but that's just for starters. They get reimbursed for their production costs, with ten to 15 percent extra tacked on. But the real money comes from the usual 15 percent of the media buy that they get. If a candidate spends three million dollars on TV, that means $450,000 for his media consultant. Small wonder more and more consultants are getting into media work.

There's a catch in signing up one of the two dozen big-name consultants, most of whom work out of Washington. You don't get their full-time attention, since they hire out to numerous campaigns at the same time. This causes trouble. Candidates want to talk to their consultants more than their consultants want to talk to them. But often consultants' aides are fobbed off on them. Lynn Cutler, running for Congress in Iowa in 1982, fired her media consultant when she couldn't get him on the phone for two weeks. But while they can't guarantee victory, consultants have their specialties. Spencer rode the campaign plane with Ronald Reagan in 1980, advising him over and over how to avert gaffes (usually by saying nothing of substance at all). Pollster Robert Teeter is adept at gauging what undecided voters want. Another pollster, Arthur Finckelstein, can tell you how to get out the hard-core conservative vote.

Consultants can help, but not much. If all goes extraordinarily well, they might add one or two percentage points. Of the factors that decide elections, consultants rank a distant fifth. What's most important, not surprisingly, is the candidate himself. Personal assets matter—a message, skill in communicating it, the ability to keep cool under stress, attractive looks, and so on. If the candidate's an ugly dope, there's nothing a consultant can do to change that. The sec-

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ond factor is the political environment. Republicans don't win in Chicago. It's Democratic turf, no matter what GOP consultants do. Next, there's the political mood. A liberal finds the going tougher in a conservative era. Then there's money, the more the better. Finally, consultants come into play. It's certainly nice to have a shrewd strategist, a clever media consultant, and a perceptive pollster. In many races they are indispensable. But so is the guy who handles the campaign schedule, and no one says he's a genius.

Nicholas Lemann agrees with Sidney Blumenthal about the powers of consultants. "They are the new political bosses," he says. "They have put more important politicians into power than Boss Tweed or Mayor Daley ever dreamed of." There's a fundamental misunderstanding here. The old bosses had real power. If you were a Democrat running for president and didn't get the support of Mayor Daley, you were out of luck in Illinois. There was nowhere else to turn in hopes of getting the convention votes of the Illinois delegation. But consultants are interchangeable, and there are many good ones. If you don't get Robert Squier to produce your television spots, then you can turn to Ray Strother or Neil Oxman or Michael Kaye. If you find that Patrick Caddell has been hired to do the polling for a rival, you can sign up Peter Hart or Paul Maslin or William Hamilton.

CONSULTANTS FEED their own mystique. They love to discuss their work, and crave press attention, knowing all the while that this detracts from their candidate. "I was guilty," admits Gerald Rafshoon, Jimmy Carter's media consultant. "I enjoyed the attention." Consultants can be counted on to chat up winning campaigns, and little else. Losers? Mum's the word. Consultants are especially talkative about long shots who got elected. True, there are cases where a consultant catapulted a candidate from obscurity to victory. This happened in the Florida governor's race in 1978, when Squier's TV commercials showed state senator Bob Graham "working for governor" at a different job every day (ditchdigger, bellhop, etc.). Graham was distinguished from the pack of candidates, and won. But cases like that are few and far between. And there were factors peculiar to the Florida race that made Graham's emergence possible. It's a transient state with weak political parties, which makes TV all the more important. Besides, Graham's opponents were duds.

Political reporters, including me, are suckers for tales of consultants' legerdemain. By ascribing election victories to consultants, they explain the secret, behind-the-scenes reality of politics. The uninitiated may think the candidate won. The reporter knows better. The consultants, who happen to be his best sources, were responsible. But there's something overlooked in the puffery about hot consultants and winning streaks. For every consultant on the winning side, there's one (in general elections) or more (in primaries) that worked for losers. If consultants get credit for victories, shouldn't they be blamed for defeats? In some cases, they should. But the press never picks up on this. If stories have appeared about consultants who've lost the knack and are mired in a slump, I've missed them. I know I've never written one like that myself.

In 1979 Squier was lionized in the *Washington Post* as "the kingmaker of the 30-second spot." He was described as "a political imagemaker riding a hot streak, the hottest streak in his career. Of the last 14 primary and general election campaigns he has worked in, Squier has lost only one." Not only had Squier put Graham in the Florida statehouse, he'd elected a bland fellow named William Winter governor of Mississippi. Winter's chief opponent in the Democratic primary was a 58-year-old spinster, and Squier's television ads played up Winter's closeness to his wife and daughter. Another spot showed Winter on military maneuvers, and noted that "the governor is the commander in chief of the National Guard." These were effective commercials. But the question is whether Squier was pivotal.

Probably not. If he were, Squier could be expected to produce winners in other Mississippi contests. In 1983 he was back—same consultant, same state, same race, but this time his candidate for governor was Michael Sturdivant. Despite spending the most money, much of it to air Squier-created ads, Sturdivant came in third in the primary. The spinster Winter had beaten four years earlier made the runoff, but she wound up losing again, even without Squier's aiding her opponent. More telling still was what happened in 1984, when Winter hired Squier in his bid for the Senate—same consultant, same candidate, same state. Winter was humiliated. In a Democratic state, he lost to incumbent Republican Thad Cochran by 58 to 42 percent. Squier now says the contest was lost before Winter announced. "We probably all did Winter a disservice by continuing to argue that he run way past the point where he had a chance to win," Squier says.

Squier may be explaining away an embarrassing defeat, but he's right. He couldn't make Winter a winner in 1984. And it points up the limitations on his ability, or any consultant's, to affect a race. Winter had hurt his own reputation by lobbying to become chancellor of the University of Mississippi, then rashly rejecting the job when it was offered and announcing for the Senate. There was also a strong conservative and Republican tide in the state in 1984. (Reagan beat Mondale 62 to 37 percent in Mississippi.) Nothing Squier provided in TV spots could erase these factors. Nor in the 1983 governor's race could he transform Sturdivant into as appealing a candidate as Winter had been in 1979. The difference wasn't Squier's work, which is always skillful, but the quality of the candidates. Winter was a better candidate than Sturdivant. He wasn't good enough, though, to overcome an unfavorable political environment and ideological mood in 1984. But how many stories did you read about Squier's losing streak?

IN 1984 the hot consultant was Roger Ailes, a Republican, who got credit for Mitch McConnell's victory over incumbent Democrat Dee Huddleston in the Kentucky Senate race. What did Ailes do? He produced a very funny television commercial that showed a bloodhound in pursuit of Huddleston, who was away from his Washington

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duties making speeches for money. When McConnell won, surprised political analysts needed a reason. So they latched onto the commercial. This was only natural. The largest chunk of money spent in campaigns goes to buy TV time. That must mean that the TV spots are the most important ingredient, right? Rarely. Getting on television just happens to be expensive. That's why it takes such a hefty percentage of campaign funds. In publishing a newspaper, the biggest expenditure is for paper. But that doesn't make paper a major factor in the success or failure of the newspaper. Anyway, Ailes got a notch in his gun for supposedly electing McConnell.

Yet the reasons had little to do with Ailes, good as his spots were. Pollsters for Huddleston went back after the race to find out why he lost. They asked which commercials voters remembered. "There was a very, very low remembrance of [the bloodhound spot], like 15 percent," said Harrison Hickman. Three times as many people recalled an ad that nicked Huddleston for poor Senate attendance and junkets. Even that ad had little to do with Huddleston's defeat. He was simply an overconfident incumbent with a mediocre record who was engulfed by the Reagan tide. Huddleston was a bad candidate running in a bad year for a Democrat.

Ailes, meanwhile gets credit for electing McConnell, but no blame for his work on behalf of Charles Percy. A month before election day, the Percy campaign put a strong tax-cutting ad on TV. His Democratic opponent, Paul Simon, dropped ten points in surveys done by his pollster. He was in deep trouble. But the tax ad was yanked. It had "run its cycle," an Ailes aide said. Percy went with another Ailes commercial that attacked Simon for having written a letter to the Ayatollah Khomeini. That ad backfired, and Simon won.

BLUNDERS LIKE the Khomeini ad in Percy's campaign are a lot more common than consultants care to admit. In the 1981 governor's race in Virginia, Republicans nominated a moderate named Marshall Coleman. Virginia is a very conservative state, and Reagan is wildly popular there. Thus Coleman, guided by consultants Douglas Bailey and John Deardourff, tried to run as a Reaganite right-winger. It didn't fly. He lost, the first time since 1966 that a Republican had lost a major statewide race in Virginia.

Pollsters also make mistakes. Polls taken for both Coleman and his Democratic opponent, Charles Robb, pegged Coleman as the winner. In 1976 a survey in North Carolina by Robert Teeter persuaded President Gerald Ford that the Republican nomination was already his. He relaxed his campaign. This allowed Ronald Reagan to pull an upset in the North Carolina primary and revive his candidacy. In 1978 a poll by Patrick Caddell's firm showed Democratic senator Thomas McIntyre of New Hampshire with a solid two-to-one lead over Republican Gordon Humphrey. Nor was there any trend toward Humphrey. This was a few weeks before the election—which Humphrey won. In Iowa that year a poll by Peter Hart a month before the election showed Democratic senator Dick Clark leading 57 to 27 percent. He lost. In 1982 Republicans were delirious about the prospects of winning the Alabama governorship. A late poll by Lance Tarrance showed a dead heat between George Wallace and Republican Emory Folmar. But Folmar lost 60 to 40 percent.

The conceit of many national political consultants is that they have expertise that local consultants haven't mastered. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. The 1979 Louisiana governor's race was a laboratory for the national crew. There were six candidates, and five hired nationally known consultants. Squier worked for Louis Lambert, then Ray Strother did. Charles Guggenheim, who had worked for Bobby Kennedy in 1968, was hired by Bubba Henry. Sonny Mouton brought in David Garth. Jimmy Fitzmorris and Paul Hardy also got out-of-state help. But the winner was David Treen, the lone Republican in the race. He used a local ad agency of no national renown. His TV spots were spare and inoffensive.

Another conceit of some consultants is the eye-popping win-loss record. In *Power* Gere boasted of an 85 percent winning percentage. No big deal, says Strother, who produced the TV spots for Gary Hart's presidential campaign in 1984. Strother quotes the advice of rodeo rider Casey Tibbs: "You get on the back of a good horse and hold on." In other words, consultants pad their percentage by taking on the right clients. "I represent a lot of incumbents," Strother says. "Incumbents tend to win." And winning is everything. Consultants rarely are praised for making the most out of a lackluster or otherwise flawed candidate, as Bailey and Deardourff did with Gerald Ford in 1976 and Rafshoon did with Carter in 1980. A loss is a loss in the consultant's world. On his list of clients, Squier names senators who won, but no Senate candidate who lost.

At the core of the myth of political consultants is the notion that they can elect presidents. Nothing could be further from the truth. Consultants actually have less influence on presidential races than any other. The higher the visibility of the race—and presidential contests are the most visible of all—the less impact consultants have. Consultants do best when voters have few sources of information about candidates. In such cases, what is conveyed in campaign advertising fills a vacuum. But in presidential races, voters are bombarded with information. There is no vacuum. The news media cover presidential campaigns in lavish detail. All a media consultant can do is produce ads that go with the general news flow. These may help marginally, but no more. In 1984 there was nothing any consultant could have done to save Walter Mondale from defeat. There was nothing any could have done to cause Reagan to lose.

THE LEGEND WAS started in 1968 by Joe McGinniss's *The Selling of the President.* McGinniss attributed Richard Nixon's election to slick handling by consultants, who closeted him except for staged sessions with voters. On the contrary, this strategy was a spectacular flop. Nixon won in spite of it. His mammoth lead over Hubert Humphrey dissolved as election day approached. If the election had occurred a week later, he would have lost. McGinniss was

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flatly wrong, but his book appealed to Nixonphobia and became a best seller.

The legend grew in 1976 with Jimmy Carter's advance to the White House. In Carter's case, the myth holds that he did whatever pollsters said he should, and that his media message was shaped accordingly. Well, not quite. Pollster Caddell was a late addition to the campaign, arriving after the TV commercials had been produced by Rafshoon. The media effort was "90 percent Carter and ten percent technique," says Rafshoon, who has given up political consulting to make movies. "We followed him around for two years and we gave you what he was saying. No political consultant would come up with these lines: 'I'll never lie to you,' or 'I want to have a country that's as good and decent and honest and competent and compassionate and as full of love as the American people.' We looked at the footage we had and these were the lines that were capturing audiences. Who came up with it? Jimmy Carter the candidate. It worked for those times."

IN 1980 the legend was bolstered by Reagan's election. Here was putty in the hands of consultants. Except for the fact that the more they handled, the worse he did. Kept under wraps by campaign manager John Sears, Reagan lost the Iowa caucuses to George Bush. Unleashed, he won the New Hampshire primary. When Sears was replaced by William Casey, a political hack, Reagan's fortunes suffered not at all. In the fall campaign against Carter, Reagan's TV ads were mushy, pointless, and dull. His California governorship was described in a spot in the vaguest possible terms. Carter's ads were riveting, far better than the spots that had allegedly carried him to victory four years earlier. The most effective one showed Carter burning the midnight oil at the White House. But commercials were irrelevant. So were all the consultants on both sides.

The same was true in 1984, except when consultants hogged the spotlight from the candidates. Just as White House reporters cover presidential aides as much as they do the president, political reporters concentrate on the ebb and flow of consultants. This diminishes candidates, who are seen as puppets. Their political message gets less attention. Patrick Caddell's rocky forays into the Hart and Mondale campaigns were widely reported. There's a quip in the political community about Caddell: if you want the consultant to get more ink than the candidate, hire Caddell. A critical moment in Hart's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination came when his consultants, notably Caddell, put an ad on TV in Illinois without his approval. He tried to yank the spot off the air just before the primary, failed to do so, and ended up looking silly. He lost the primary, and his decline began.

Nothing like the Illinois glitch happens in the literature about the awesome power of consultants. The puffery about the big-name national consultants has created a whole new role for them. No, they aren't bosses, but they are able to make candidates look credible—just by being hired. If a candidate has a team of well-known consultants on board, he gains instant credibility. Political action committees are more likely to supply money. The press takes the candidate more seriously. When Stewart Bainum Jr., a Maryland businessman, hired Patrick Caddell last year to take a Senate race poll for him, it warranted a full story in the *Washington Post.* Bainum had gotten all he could have wanted from Caddell. Soon he moved on to another pollster.

The fund-raising role is a critical one. Mark Siegel, the chairman of the National Bipartisan Political Action Committee, a Jewish PAC, says consultants are "an indication of the seriousness of a campaign." If a candidate looking for money drops by with a consultant Siegel respects, that improves his chances. Siegel's PAC sends out a critique of every Senate race, which includes the names of each candidate's consultants. Even in House races, consultants can bring money. "If a challenger has been able to attract big-name consultants, it raises eyebrows," says Joseph Gaylord, executive director of the National Republican Congressional Committee. "People are going to pay more attention. PACs are." But sometimes it doesn't work that way. When Linda Chavez left the White House staff to run for the Senate in Maryland, she hired Ed Rollins, who ran Reagan's 1984 campaign. Her expectation was that he would bring in the big donors. However, Rollins hasn't made fund-raising calls for her—he's a strategist, after all—and Chavez has been forced to shave back on his spending plans.

WITH SO MANY requests for their services, consultants spread themselves thinly. "They're getting away from what makes a good consultant: personal attention to a candidate," says Todd Domke, a Massachusetts consultant. Consultants have a limited number of fresh ideas. The same campaign plans and TV gimmicks show up again and again. "Candidates think they're getting a fresh, 150-page campaign plan, and it's been around for 20 years," says Siegel. Candidates who want to demonstrate that they're tough on crime are shown slamming a jail door shut, a crude image that has little impact. In the Alabama governor's race this year, state attorney general Charles Graddick got nowhere until he dropped the jail-door ad in favor of one calling for improved schools. David Garth uses roughly the same style in every campaign spot—cinema verité episodes with written information crawling across the bottom of the screen. It worked in the 1970s, less so in the 1980s.

It's partly fear that keeps consultants in demand, fear that your opponent will get a leg up. If one candidate hires a famous pollster or media consultant, the other candidates have to get expensive consultants of their own. In the end, the consultants nullify each other in most races. But the problem for a candidate is that he's got to hire consultants to achieve this. If a candidate goes to the trouble of running in the first place, he doesn't want to give his opponents even the small edge that consultants might bestow. So he takes on a squad of them as a defensive maneuver. But who knows? The race might be close, and one of his consultants might come up with the one-in-a-million gimmick that gets him elected. It happened once in Florida. □

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THE WALDHEIM FILE

BY PETER LUBIN

IN JULY 1942 an anti-partisan operation that has entered history simply as the "Kozara Massacres" took place in West Bosnia (now Yugoslavia), under the command of General Friedrich Stahl. In the campaign 71 Germans died, 5,000 of the enemy were killed (including many noncombatants), and 12,000 taken prisoner. In a "cleansing operation" afterward, hundreds of peasants were shot. Sixty-eight thousand local inhabitants, including 23,000 children, were taken away to be murdered at the local concentration camp of Jasenovac.

On March 16, 1986, Kurt Waldheim assured the Yugoslav newspaper *Vecernje Novosti* that he had taken no part in any operations in the Balkans. On March 26, after the paper published excerpts from Yugoslav War Crimes Commission files, he admitted: "At the time of 'Operation Kozara,' I was in that territory, but was not directly involved in the fighting." When a reporter asked him how he could have denied taking part in military operations, he replied: "Who can remember everything from the war period?"

On April 6 Waldheim issued a 13-page memorandum defending himself. In it, and in a second version on April 12 (the only important change was one altered date), he claims that although he had been appointed to "Combat Group West Bosnia" as an "interpreter" in April 1942, "this was followed by immediate assignment as a liaison officer" to an Italian unit 200 kilometers away.

For Waldheim's performance at Kozara, the Croatian puppet government awarded him the Zvonimir medal with oak clusters on July 22, 1942. Waldheim has claimed that this medal was scattered like confetti: "many low-ranking staff officers without special merits were granted such medals. . . . I was awarded the medal only due to my formally being assigned to the West Bosnia Combat Group in Banja Luka, Croatia." Both the German and the Croatian documents show, however, that the medal was awarded to only three German officers—out of some 20,000 German soldiers in that campaign. It was bestowed specifically "for merit under fire." Moreover, Waldheim's claim that he was not in the campaign at all but some 200 kilometers away in Montenegro is contradicted by recently discovered documents that indicate that this liaison group had been disbanded two months earlier.

Nor was the medal the only recognition that Waldheim achieved at Kozara. A chronicler of the 714th Division describes Kozara as a battle "without pity, without mercy," a "final liquidation" of "subhumans." The divisional historian summed up: "Harshness alone can give peace to the country, and only a cold heart can command what needs to be commanded. The most necessary has already been done." In the commemorative roll appended to this account, of the 20,000 men in the campaign, only 34 receive mention. Twenty-fifth on the list is Kurt Waldheim.

In late July 1942, Waldheim arrived at the headquarters of the German 12th Army in Salonika. On July 13, 9,000 Jewish men and boys had been summoned to Liberty Square at dawn and made to stand in the Greek sun, from 8 a.m. until late afternoon. If anyone moved or shaded his eyes he was beaten senseless by the German soldiers who ringed the square. The spectacle was thought so edifying that on July 26, 1942, the German-language paper in the Balkans published a photograph of the Jews gathered in the square. It was surely the talk of the town when Waldheim arrived a few days later.

In his memorandums Waldheim says that he worked as an "interpreter" in Arsakli (a site on a hill, on the outskirts of Salonika, locally known as "Panorama" because of its clear view of the city below) until he went on "study leave"—in mid-November 1942 to write a thesis about Konstantin Frantz (a minor German diplomat and Nazi *avant la lettre*). German military records show, however, that he was in Salonika throughout December 1942, the month in which Salonika's vast and venerable Jewish cemetery was destroyed.

Waldheim is no more reliable about the end of his leave. When first confronted with evidence of his Balkan years last March, Waldheim admitted that he had been in Salonika "on March 31, 1943," and for the next six weeks said that he had been in Salonika in "late March or early April 1943." In his first memorandum, he repeats these dates: "April 1943: Returns to staff of AHC 12 (12th Army), now staff of Army Group E," in Salonika. But on April 12, Waldheim published the second version of his "Defense Memorandum," which incorporated an unannounced change in the date of his return to Salonika. In the first memorandum, it had been "April 1943"; in the second, Waldheim "returned via Tirana in early July 1943." And so, in this account, he absents himself from Salonika a while longer—just enough of a while to return after the Jewish deportations were over. (Actually there was one last convoy, to Bergen-Belsen, in August.)

Waldheim claims that he went on leave, and then returned to duty, not by reporting to his post in Salonika (Arsakli) but by going directly to Tirana, Albania, where

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Peter Lubin wrote "The Organization Man" in the April 7 issue.

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he says he worked for three months as an interpreter. On every other leave he always reported back first to headquarters of Army Group E. That accords with military practice and with common sense. An officer returns to his post after a leave, and only then is sent out on his next mission. Yet we are asked to believe that on this occasion, and no other, Waldheim did not first return to Salonika.

Until several weeks ago Waldheim insisted that he knew of "no atrocities" committed by any of the units with which he was associated. On April 16 he told the *New York Times* that, yes, he had known of such atrocities, but that they always took place very far from wherever he happened to be.

In August 1943 Waldheim kept the daybook for his army group. His entries show an intimate knowledge of atrocities: "According to a new Führer order, bandits [i.e., partisans] captured in battle are to be shot," he wrote on August 8. "Others suspected of banditry, etc., are to be taken prisoner and sent to Germany for use in labor details." He added that specific instructions for dealing with "bandits" were being sent to the First Mountain Division of the 11th Army, for that division had warned headquarters of an area that was to be "combed most severely, and the male population is to be shot and/or seized in entirety and evacuated," in accordance with the new order. These messages, incidentally, were introduced as evidence of war atrocities at the Nuremberg trials.

When Italy left the war in September 1943, the Germans turned ruthlessly on their former allies. In Athens, Waldheim helped arrange for the deportation of tens of thousands of Italian solders to forced labor camps in Germany. We have the written record of his report to Salonika headquarters by telephone on September 22, stating that one such deportation of 25,000 Italians was complete.

BY DECEMBER 1, 1943, at the latest, Kurt Waldheim was working as the third-ranking officer in the intelligence department (known as I-c) attached to the High Command. Curiously, the official title for this position in all I-c units was Third *Ordonnanzoffizier*. Waldheim had wide-ranging and important tasks. The historian Hagen Fleischer, whose field is the German occupation of Greece (and who has been misleadingly quoted in Waldheim's defense), has said that "Waldheim was the best-informed officer of the Wehrmacht in Greece at the end of the occupation in 1944."

Waldheim's explicit duties included morning and evening briefings on the enemy situation, interrogations of captured Allied servicemen and of partisans and civilians. Most important, Waldheim's duties included "*Sonderaufgaben*," or "special tasks." This was a Nazi euphemism generally reserved for the messiest matters: mass terror through hostage killings, for example, or reprisal attacks on villages, not to mention anti-Jewish measures.

Waldheim frequently briefed General Alexander von Löhr's staff on the enemy situation. At these meetings they discussed such matters as the "effective" use of hostages on a train "to ensure the security of all rail transport" (May 20, 1944) or the forced labor of civilians (June 13, 1944).

Waldheim states in his memorandums that "there were no POW or partisan interrogations carried out" at army headquarters at Arsakli, and that he never interrogated anyone. This disclaimer may have been prompted by a desire to dissociate himself from the infamous German practice of accompanying interrogation with torture, sometimes ending in summary execution. But on July 18, 1944, Waldheim reported in the daybook on the interrogation of Greek partisans, and there is evidence that he also informed the High Command on the interrogation of Allied POWs.

ON AUGUST 9, 1944, he reported on the success of the S.S. "Operation Viper," which some researchers believe was a roundup of the last remaining Jews in southern Greece. On August 11 he identified places of partisan activity, which in German practice would then be automatically subject to brutal reprisals. The evening report for that day reports on "band activity" south of Iráklion, on Crete. Two days later the Germans launched reprisals, described in I-c reports as a "cleansing operation," in which they "destroyed two band villages" and "shot to death 20 hostages." These reports were among a group captured from the headquarters of Army Group E that were introduced into evidence by the prosecution at Nuremberg. Waldheim's unit also received reports on the Jews in southern Greece after the Italians no longer served as protection. His unit was informed, for example, of the need to round up all Jews who were not Turkish nationals. A later report discusses the hostility of Italians and Greeks to the German seizure of Jews.

In Salonika itself, we know that Waldheim was present in July 1942, a few weeks after the first "*Juden-musterung*" (when the Jews were lined up in Liberty Square), and in December, during the destruction of the cemetery. And, at least according to his earlier admission, he was also present in early April, in the middle of the deportations, and in mid-July and August, during their final phase. When Roman Loos, who had directed the Secret Field Police in the Salonika area, was told that Waldheim claimed he knew nothing about the deportations of Jews on Wehrmacht trains, he exclaimed: "He didn't know about that? That was known to everybody."

A message sent on April 28, 1944, by the I-c unit on the island of Corfu requested that Waldheim's unit cooperate with the German security services "to bring about implementation measures" for the deportation of the 2,000 Jews still on Corfu. Such cooperation was a duty of Waldheim's immediate superior, Colonel Warnstorff, with whom Waldheim worked closely, and for whom he frequently substituted. Waldheim's unit informed General Löhr of the request, and Löhr agreed on May 12 to provide shipping space. Within three weeks, all 1,795 Jews had been seized and shipped to Auschwitz. Colonel Warnstorff, incidentally, has turned up alive and well in Vienna (he is German) to serve, for the past two months, as a character witness for his old comrade-in-arms. The two must share some interesting memories. Years later, while examining a handgun from his days in Greece (a handgun his son says he took with him to every new diplomatic posting), Wald-

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heim exclaimed to his son: "Those were the days!"

Waldheim's Balkan career was never examined by the Yugoslav Commission on War Crimes when it considered charges against him in December 1947. They limited their investigation to the period from April 1944 to May 1945. After examining the role of his unit, and his special duties, and after hearing the testimony of several witnesses, the commission adjudged Kurt Waldheim to be a "war criminal" whose extradition was "mandatory." Nothing has happened since then to exculpate him. On the contrary, documentary evidence has just surfaced, unavailable to the Yugoslavs in 1947, that dovetails with the testimonial evidence they did record.

On March 26, 1986, the Yugoslavs finally published excerpts from their War Crimes File #F25572. Continued and startling revelations from captured German war records in the National Archives in Washington required some response. Moreover, they were goaded into their own revelations by Waldheim's unspeakable equating of Nazis and partisans. ("There were atrocities on both sides.")

Their silence on Waldheim for so many years and their obvious reluctance, even now, to reveal more from their files require explanation. Waldheim says that the "Yugoslav authorities were aware of the incorrectness of the allegations," for otherwise they would have objected to his being elected secretary-general. Marshal Tito would not possibly have befriended him, he insists, if the charges had not been found baseless. Waldheim *was* close to Tito, but neither Tito nor any other Yugoslav ever maintained that Waldheim was innocent.

When the Yugoslavs transmitted their file on Waldheim to the Allied war crimes registry in London in 1948, they already knew, according to documents, that Waldheim was serving in the Austrian foreign ministry. At some point several decades ago, someone must have brought to Tito's attention the fact that a rising star of Austrian (and even international) diplomacy was on the list of war criminals wanted by Yugoslavia. A former vice president of Yugoslavia, Mitja Ribicic, has stated that "he [Tito] knew that Waldheim was on the German front, that Waldheim was in this unit . . . *what is in our documents*." The ex-chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kreisky, has said that Tito knew all about Waldheim, but was "very cunning."

CONSIDER HOW Tito must have calculated: Waldheim was one of 2,700 war criminals wanted by the Yugoslavs. A mere 150 were extradited, and those only in the first years after the war. There was no chance that Waldheim's extradition would have been granted if the Yugoslavs had made a request for it. Indeed, it would only have antagonized Austria, a major trading partner and an employer of many Yugoslav workers (the same considerations apply today). Against this, Tito could weigh the possible benefits of having in his corner a man who was being promoted from rank to rank in the Austrian foreign service.

The Yugoslavs' reluctance to publish more at this point is based on two considerations. First, they do not want to endanger important economic benefits from Austria. More important, many in the Yugoslav leadership consider it dangerous to reveal the whole truth about the man Tito befriended. It would be hard to explain away protection for that kind of crime.

The excerpts that were published show that the Yugoslav inquiry of 1947 had been a dignified and sober proceeding, not a kangaroo court. The commission reviewed a number of orders issued by the staff of the High Command of Army Group E, which elucidated "the kind of role the group performed." Waldheim's intelligence unit had "decision capabilities where reprisals were in question" and "had a significant role in hostage procedures." It was precisely in these areas that Lieutenant Waldheim had "specific responsibilities." Aside from his "previous possible involvement in drafting and executing earlier orders concerning reprisals, it is certain that he would elaborate and perform [such functions]. . . ." The organizational chart of the unit shows that one of its functions was the "drafting of orders for operational commands."

THE YUGOSLAV paper reported that "there is also the testimony of numerous witnesses. Our State Commission stated that it would be too much to quote all the crimes committed as the consequence of the orders given with the involvement of Lieutenant Waldheim." But the paper did include some of the testimony. Among the witnesses quoted was Johann Mayer, a personnel clerk in Waldheim's department from April 1944 to May 1945, in Greece and later in Yugoslavia. Mayer stated that Waldheim's "duties were those of an intelligence officer. Waldheim's task was to prepare drafts for his superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Warnstorff, on all actions of Unit I-c concerning procedures for hostages, reprisals, war prisoners, and civilians. I was informed that at that time, while the Army Group E was in transfer from Greece to Yugoslavia, a general order was issued that the decision on reprisals, hostages, etc., would not depend on the decision of the field marshal, or other troop commanders, but on the military group E—i.e., on their I-c officers."

Other witnesses corroborated this testimony: "Recommendations were made by Lieutenant Waldheim and were for the approval of his superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Warnstorff. If the superior officer approved the recommendation, the final approval was to come from the chief of headquarters, General Schmidt-Richberg. In some minor cases Lieutenant Colonel Warnstorff could have made decisions by himself." And if Warnstorff was unavailable? Major Klaus Mellinschoff testified that "measures of reprisal and retaliation were applied by the German general staff and high-ranking German officers. The same line of action was taken by Waldheim."

Mayer further testified that Waldheim bore responsibility for two atrocities. "I remember certain persons having been murdered at Sarajevo in November 1944. They were executed according to the order given by Waldheim in retaliation for the desertion from the German army of some other persons. . . . " We do not know if there is any further testimony or evidence for

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this, but Waldheim was in Sarajevo in November 1944.

The more important incident was the atrocity in the area of Kozane and Stip. Two documents found this May complement and strengthen Mayer's testimony about Waldheim's involvement in this episode. These are Waldheim's morning and evening reports for October 12, 1944. On that day, in Arsakli, Waldheim identified the area surrounding the road between Stip and Kozane as containing the heaviest concentration of "bandit" activity in Macedonia. He informed his superiors that this partisan buildup was the "most important" development taking place in Macedonia. Two days later, in this exact area, the Germans burned down the villages of Krupiste, Gorni Balvan, and Dolniy Balvan and massacred their inhabitants.

WALDHEIM HAS admitted that he knew that "operational decisions" were made on the basis of his report. He also knew the standard operating procedure for dealing with partisan activity: "They must be retaliated in every case with shooting or hanging of hostages, destruction of surrounding localities, etc." (a directive of General Löhr issued on August 10, 1943). And his responsibility may have been even more direct. As Mayer testified, "It was up to him [Waldheim] to bring up suggestions concerning reprisal actions."

Mayer's testimony was corroborated by someone in a position to know. In his defense memorandum, Waldheim refers to a certain witness against him as one "Eckbert Hilcer," whom, he says, "not a single member of the surviving officers and staff of Arsakli can remember." He also refers to another man, a "Captain Egberts," "who seems to have given orders for this event [i.e., the Kozane-Stip massacres], was convicted to death, and executed in Belgrade in 1948." In fact, "Eckbert Hilcer," who was allegedly unknown to Waldheim and his fellows, and "Captain Egberts" are one and the same. Captain Karl-Heinz Egberts-Hilker served in the "Reconnaissance Battalion 22" of the Wehrmacht's 22nd Infantry Division. It was he who lead the killing operation, a role he admitted and for which he was hanged in Belgrade as a war criminal in 1948. Before he died, he testified that the order for the killings had come from Kurt Waldheim.

Waldheim's method of dealing with these two accusers, Mayer and Egberts-Hilker, is the same. He said he "never heard of" Mayer. Later he conceded that Mayer did work at army headquarters, but calls him a "liar" who was just "trying to save his skin." Mayer, however, had no need to "save his skin" because there is no indication that the charges against him had anything to do with the Kozane-Stip massacre, or with anything so grave. Mayer's descriptions of Waldheim's duties, furthermore, accord perfectly with what, from other sources, we know those duties to have been.

It is more plausible to assume that both men were telling the truth. How is it, after all, that Egberts-Hilker, in the field far from Army Group E headquarters at Arsakli, would even have known the name of Kurt Waldheim (a self-described "low-level desk lieutenant") had Kurt Waldheim not actually been—as the captain testified—the man who gave him the order in October 1944?

When *Vecernje Novosti* first published excerpts from the Yugoslav War Crimes Commission, Waldheim explained to the newspaper: "I know that in that year [1947] your country compiled a list of war criminals, listing every German officer who took part in the Second World War." But the Yugoslavs registered as suspected war criminals only 2,700 names. Of these, many were non-Germans (e.g., Croatian fascists). Out of the more than 300,000 officers and men in Army Group E, perhaps 1,500 were listed.

He has also said, "I had practically no command power at all." Even if this were true, it would be irrelevant. The Yugoslavs did not charge him with ordering the killings in the Kozane-Stip area. They charged him with "proposing" them. He claims further that "at the date of these atrocities I was not in the areas of Stip and Kozane." And he says that German military records give the date of the murders as "October 20," whereas he, Waldheim, had flown from Salonika to Mitrovica a week before, on October 13. But the survivors of the atrocity remember it as taking place on October 14. Risto Ognjanov, now 82, managed to survive by hiding under the corpses of others: "For me, October 14 is my second birthday," he told *Newsweek*. "It was the beginning of my second life."

It may well be that Waldheim flew out of Arsakli on October 13 (though the pilot has no recollection of him). But this would have no bearing on his proposing or even ordering the atrocity. In fact, if we accept Waldheim's story that he flew on October 13, we may arrive at the most plausible explanation of why Egberts-Hilker distinctly remembered the order coming from Waldheim. The officers at Arsakli moved to their new headquarters in Yugoslavia in two groups. Some left on October 13, others flew out on October 14, which is the date that the High Command officially transferred from Arsakli to Mitrovica. Waldheim's report for October 15 shows that the High Command began to operate at Mitrovica only at 9 p.m. on October 14. Suppose Colonel Warnstorff either had to assume other duties for officers still in Arsakli on October 13, or was still in Arsakli himself. This could explain why, given the unusual circumstances and military measures deemed urgent, Waldheim, substituting for his chief, would assume greater authority and could have given the command to Egberts-Hilker.

THE THEME RUNS through the Waldheim sonata. During the killings at Kozara, Waldheim says he was 200 kilometers away. He was present at the Black Operation, but only for one day and only for a conversation and a photo opportunity at the Podgorica airport. He happened to be on leave in Vienna and then in far-off Tirana during the Salonika deportations. He just happened to be on yet another leave when the Jews all over southern Greece were seized in late March 1944. According to Waldheim, in wartime he was a regular Bartleby the Scrivener. Head bent over his desk, he seems never to have looked up: "I swear I did not know about the deportation of the Jews, and I swear I never saw a single partisan," he says. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Is Paris Burning?

Tea in the Harem is a strikingly good film, and—or therefore—I begin by explaining its twisty title. The place is Paris today, mostly in the housing developments on the outskirts; most of the characters are North African émigrés. One day a teenage schoolboy, apparently the son of such émigrés, is called to the blackboard to write the theorem of

Tea in the Harem
(Cinecom International)

Archimedes, which in French is *Le Théorème d'Archimède*. The boy knows the words only by ear, so he writes *Le Thé au Harem d'Archimède* (the film's title in France). The resulting embarrassment drives the boy out of school, permanently.

Mehdi Charef, who wrote and directed this film—his first—is Algerian-born (1952) and arrived in France when he was 12. He grew up in the housing project where much of this film was shot, worked in a factory for 13 years, and wrote constantly, chiefly screenplays. A novelist happened to see an early draft of this screenplay and advised Charef to novelize it. Charef did so, and the novel was published, successfully. (The title of the novel took the aural mistake one twist further: it was called *Le Thé au Harem d'Archi Ahmed*.)

Charef's novel was read by Michele Ray-Gavras and her husband, the director Costa-Gavras. It was she who became executive producer and did all the necessary pushing to get the screenplay written, in revised form, and to finance the project. (Note: part of the financing came from the French government, as did part of the financing of Agnès Varda's *Vagabond*, which is equally unchauvinistic.) The producer and her husband risked asking the author to direct because of the cinematic instincts he had shown in the script, and Costa-Gavras was right: he made himself the unit's still photographer while Charef made his directing debut—impressively. Except for a tendency to overdo high overhead shots, Charef has treated every moment with surety and understanding, has designed every motion of actors and camera simply and justly.

Once the title is explained, cumbersome though that job is, it seems justified: it crystallizes the not-quite-French status of most of the young people in the film. They are about as much a part of France as the schoolboy's rendition is the true answer to what the teacher asked. The success of the title comes after one sees the film; the success of the film itself was probable before shooting had begun. Charef's casting is excellent. The principal character, Madjid, a teenager, is played by Kader Boukhanef, who was born of émigré parents in Paris in 1965. Charef has said, "Madjid, that's me," but there are substantive differences—a decade's difference in age and the fact, which figures in the film, that Madjid is French-born. However, Boukhanef has exactly what the role needs: an immediately perceptible sweetness that sets up a tension with his surly, brawling, sly behavior. Boukhanef's pensive face validates some of the private acts of tenderness and generosity that mingle with his callous thievery and pimping. His *vrai* French pal, a less complex role, is played quite competently by Remi Martin. (What a name for a French actor. Imagine a British actor named Chivaz Regal.) Malika, Madjid's mother, who wants him to go back to their real home where he has a chance to become a freestanding man, is played by the affecting Saida Bekkouche. Her husband, who moves in an unexplained semi-dazed state from home to job and back again, always helped by someone, is an actor named Brahim Ghenaiem—a character quietly important because, for all his incompetence, he is always treated with respect and deference, even by the unruly Madjid. And his pal's sister, Chantal, who is as tacitly in love with Madjid as he with her, is the gentle Nathalie Jadot.

This film begins with hopelessness as its condition. These teenage friends—there's a gang, of course, not all of Arab stock—accept social alienation as their present and future. To the usual slum-created reasons that apply to many teenagers in Paris and around the world are added the specifics of the Arab as alien. Madjid makes an attempt to get a job after his mother pleads especially hard; but the smooth personnel man says that according to his dossier Madjid has poor eyesight. Madjid leaves, and we see the personnel man ushering in a white boy with thick glasses.

The one honest job that Madjid and his pal get is boring and irritating, and certainly doesn't pay what they can get by picking pockets or robbing a locker room in a tennis club or taking a prostitute around to the shacks of immigrant workers. (Their friend who ran away from school after the blackboard embarrassment drives up one night in a fancy car, flaunting plentiful evidence of money—his source of income unspecified.)

FILMS WORTH SEEING

My Beautiful Laundrette. Pakistanis in London today, mingling and non-mingling, succeeding and failing, loving and loathing. Discursive but humane, funny, moving. (Reviewed 4/7/86)

Shoah. Claude Lanzmann's nine-and-a-half-hour documentary about the Final Solution is now making its way to more cities, towns, universities. Shown in two parts, the whole is a monumental experience. (10/28/85)

Turtle Diary. Wry, intelligent game-playing. Two Londoners "rescue" sea turtles from an aquarium and take them to the Atlantic. Harold Pinter's script, from Russell Hoban's novel, is exquisitely played by Glenda Jackson and Ben Kingsley. (3/10/86)

Vagabond. Agnès Varda's intense yet calm chronicle of a teenage girl's wanderings and death in southern France. No explanations, just relentless observation. This, plus Sandrine Bonnaire's fierce-frozen performance, makes it gripping. (6/2/86)

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We might perhaps think that these youths are facile in their despair, but we never doubt that, facile or not, their despair is genuine. We never doubt that Charef knows what he is talking about, because he presents his world deftly with relentless, credible detail. For a first film, this is a phenomenal piece of work. (Costa-Gavras says he had to give Charef very little advice.) For instance, the blackboard episode is a clever flashback, done in black and white, silent, in jagged motion, with the whir of a projector. Except for one episode involving Chantal that is sheer 1910 melodrama, *Tea in the Harem* is a work of naturalism that Gorky might have admired.

But Gorky would not have seen all the previous comparable films. The only significant trouble with *Tea in the Harem* is, in a sense, not with the film, but with us. We, unlike Gorky, have seen many, many films, widely varying in quality, that deal with alienated teenagers in other European cities, in Harlem, in the Hispanic section of Los Angeles, in various American places with native Indian communities. The feeling is inescapable that, well-done though Charef's film is, we are seeing the form traversed once again—this time in the mostly Arab housing projects outside Paris. If there is such a thing as sin, it probably was a sin to write that last line. When a film is as good as this, on a subject of social misery, what right have we to complain of the slightest hint of nodding familiarity? Still, truth is truth, even for film-goers; and the truth in this case is that *Tea in the Harem* seems fundamentally one more instance, however telling, of received wisdom. I urge readers to see it, but I cannot pretend that the film will do much more than introduce them to valuable talents.

Charef is said to be shooting his second film, about the nightlife around the Place Pigalle. I hope that he is using the abilities, clearly implied here, to develop themes, bonds, angers beneath the grim data of his material.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Advanced Machines

Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* is a six-page response to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; Robert Wilson's production with NYU students (at Mainstage Two) is a two-and-a-half-hour response to Müller's six pages. Although this suggests that the original object is receding further and further into the distance, the results are dazzling, a significant advance in a historic collaboration.

Hamletmachine
by Heiner Müller

Müller is a celebrated East German dramatist/director whose works are just becoming known in this country, largely through the translations of Carl Weber (Performing Arts Journal Publications) and the ministrations of Wilson himself. His work is occasionally performed in off-off-Broadway venues, and he has lately achieved wider recognition in the United States for his contributions to Wilson's epic *The CIVIL warS* and for his prologue (a 12-page continuous sentence) to Wilson's recent *Alcestis*. For Wilson, who usually regards texts as fanged animals preparing to leap at his throat, Müller represents a writer who stimulates rather than threatens his imagistic imagination. Paradoxically, the apolitical Wilson has developed into the ideal director for the politically engaged Müller.

This happy relationship is based on deep mutual respect, combined with total artistic autonomy. What they share in common is a storehouse of dream imagery. Increasingly, Müller's "plays" have become less conventional dialogues than hallucinatory poems, designed to disorder the senses; increasingly, the hallucinations are being inspired by the myths and characters of classical dramatic literature. Reordering Greek drama has typically been one of the central concerns of modern playwrights—Cocteau, Sartre, Anouilh, Giraudoux, O'Neill, T. S. Eliot among them. But it was not until Brecht's *Coriolan* that contemporary playwrights began trespassing imaginatively on Shakespeare's plays. After that, Edward Bond pro-

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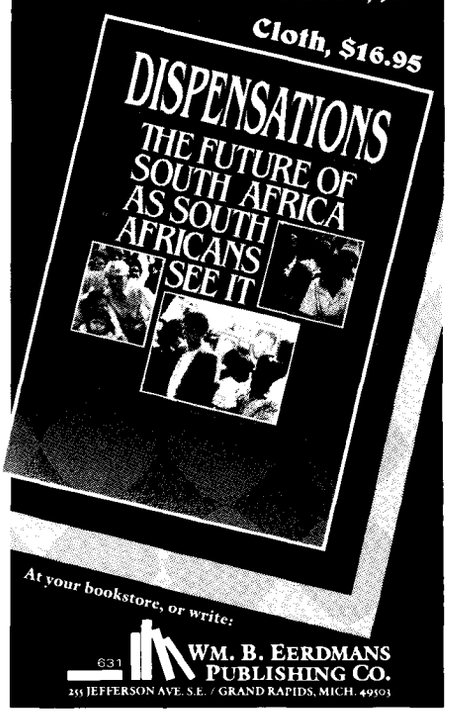

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duced a meditation on *King Lear* (called *Lear*) and Eugène Ionesco turned *Macbeth* into the absurdist farce *Macbett*. Now Müller has begun using the materials of Greek and Shakespearean tragedy—*Medea*, *Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Hamlet*, etc.—more freely than classical dramatists ever used myth or story.

MÜLLER'S APPROACH is to drag the shadows and silhouettes of classical characters into the 20th century, dumping them into a maelstrom of contemporary issues—female subjugation, terrorism, revolution, madness, and nuclear panic included. Like Eliot's, his pieces are assemblages of shards and fragments shored against his ruin, the shattered memory of history running through them like a nagging, demented refrain. His texts can feature five-page soliloquies or uninterrupted silence, while his figures split, multiply, advance, and recede in waves of heroic anonymity. *Hamletmachine* features only five or six characters from Shakespeare's play (Hamlet, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, and Horatio/Polonius) and only one line of dialogue ("Denmark's a prison"). But it includes a barrage of quotations from other writers, from Karl Marx's introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* ("The main point is to overthrow all existing conditions . . .") to the mutterings of Susan Atkins at the Manson trial ("When she walks through your bedrooms carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth"). Assailed by monstrous events, bombarded by the "daily nausea Nausea" of the media and its "prefabricated babble," characters like Hamlet are no longer able to function or play out their parts: "My drama didn't happen. The script has been lost."

As for Ophelia ("the one the river didn't keep"), she refuses her part entirely: "I eject all the sperm I have received. I turn the milk of my breasts into lethal poison. I take back the world I gave birth to. I choke between my thighs the world I gave birth to. I bury it in my womb. Down with the happiness of submission." She will neither accept her fate nor take refuge in suicide. She will tear up the photos of all the men who made love to her (even the author's photograph gets torn in the course of the play). Entombed in history, she and all the characters are beating their wings against the cage of their captivity.

Müller's motor impulses are deeply political, though nondidactic. He is given to asking questions without providing answers, confronting the audience with the butt-end of its own traditions. His charnel-house imagery, which establishes his links with his countrymen Büchner and Brecht, is the language of German neo-Romanticism. It comes from the butcher shop, but it is also inspired by the deliquescence and putrefaction he sees in the modern world. Müller's borrowed characters, therefore, are not dramatic figures so much as figures in a muddied historical landscape—where they resonate with the experience of gas ovens, revolutionary violence, nuclear terror, and radioactive contamination.

ROBERT WILSON has been doing similar things in his own work, not just with such classical characters as Medea, Alcestis, or Lear, but also with actual historical personages: Stalin, Freud, Einstein, Patty Hearst, Queen Victoria, Frederick the Great. In *Hamletmachine* he treats Müller's dramatis personae with the same combination of care and indifference with which he treats the real lives of his own people. Every line of Müller's text is there, and every stage direction; but the stage directions are announced rather than enacted, while the spoken lines are never accompanied by the anticipated illustrative action. Neither Wilson nor his actors attempt to "interpret" Müller's text (much to the delight of an author who prefers his words unfreighted with other's thoughts). What they offer instead is a parallel reinforcing event.

The results are remarkable. Performed in a tiny 74-seat theater after only three-and-a-half weeks of rehearsal with undergraduates in John Wulp's experimental theater program, *Hamletmachine* is a model of theatrical discipline. Wilson has choreographed the piece within an inch of its life, each beat signaled by the stage manager with the click of a Chinese baton. The setting is simple: a long table where three women sit, overly made up like forties movie stars (I thought of Linda Darnell, Esther Williams, and Hedy Lamarr), a bare tree stroked and attended by another woman, and screens on each of the three visible walls of the stage. On a nearby rolling office chair sits another woman, a wraith with powdered, blown hair and powdered skin. Accompanied by the sounds of barking dogs and a melancholy piano obbligato for one finger, this setting, like the hands of a moving clock (Müller's "machine"?), changes position four times in the course of the evening, each time uncovering a new screen.

The stage is full of Ophelias, the most significant being a lovely young girl with a long black pigtail. There are also a number of Hamlets, including a swaggering young man in a leather jacket and boots, a boy in a yellow jogging suit, another in a torn T-shirt and jeans who knocks down a book on each of his appearances, and the young lad who speaks most of Müller's text. Gertrude is represented by a woman in a Victorian ballroom gown, Claudius by a top-hatted man in a frock coat, his face coal black.

What happens is not easy to describe because it is more a sensory trip than an ordered series of events. You fasten on a detail—a raised finger, the book falling on the table, the three women scratching their heads or, fists in mouth, emitting piercing screams—and enter a new form of time and space. Your eye wanders along the set, across the joins and holes of the curious furniture, with the leisure enjoyed at a museum. Suddenly, a screen is lowered and the whole space changes. As a Schubert piano piece is played, the action is transferred to film, with Müller's lines functioning as subtitles. The screen images catch fire, then turn purple; the women transform into apes. The image goes cubist, as if seen through the glass door of a shower; then the projection minifies, turns white, and disappears. The evening ends abruptly, as all three wall screens are simultaneously revealed and a fourth is drawn in front of the audience.

NOT ALL of this is of equal interest. The production has its longueurs, and the undergraduate actors, though physically adept, do not always show sufficient vocal authority. Still, they appear remarkably mature on stage, and strictly from a training perspective, their Wilson experience is bound to affect them deeply, even those whose eyes are looking West Coastward. Some members of the audience will no doubt be confirmed in their conviction that Wilson turns actors into puppets; but the precision work of these young people after four weeks with their director is more expressive, and more valuable, than three years of high emoting.

Major changes in theater usually happen imperceptibly—the progress from the epic style of Shakespeare to the proscenium realism of Ibsen took almost 300 years to accomplish. We are now wit-

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nessing a theatrical revolution that is dramatically rapid, in which our conventional notions of character, action, plot, and theme are being fundamentally altered, and our perception of causal reality radically shattered. Müller's *Hamletmachine*, like all of his works, is another step in that process, and Wilson's production of *Hamletmachine*, like all of his productions, is another landmark in the modern theater's exploration of the hidden corners of life.

What a democracy needs to remember.

THE IDOLATRY OF POLITICS

BY LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI

CONSIDER WHAT IS probably the most famous single sentence ever written in the Western hemisphere: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." (If it is not the most famous, it is the second most famous, after "Coke is it!") Immediately we notice that what seemed self-evident to Thomas Jefferson would appear either patently false or meaningless and superstitious to most of the great men who keep shaping our political imagination: to Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Marx and all his followers, Nietzsche, Weber, and for that matter, to most contemporary political theorists.

If "self-evident" means obvious, or deriving its truth from the very meaning of the concepts involved, these truths are not self-evident at all. They are now reserved for pontifical messages or Sunday sermons, yet they are banned beyond recall from permissible philosophical or theoretical idioms. There are a few thinkers who still stick by the belief that the criteria of good and evil, instead of being freely invented (or freely canceled, if needed) by the human race, or expressing merely its biological invariants, are somehow embedded in the order of things. Those adventurers are well aware, however, of treading on slippery soil.

That such a change of perception matters, there is no need to prove. The rationalist refusal to take for granted any inherited order of political or moral rules was, as we know, an aspect of the same centuries-long process whereby the modern idea of negative freedom, and the principles of freedom of economic activity, and of legal equality, were established. Market economy, rationalist philosophy, liberal political doctrines and institutions, and modern science emerged as interconnected aspects of the same evolution, and none of them could have asserted itself separately.

Still, even though the prime target of this ideological and political development was once the Church, with its claims to spiritual and political supremacy, an important part of the Enlightenment was ideologically inconsistent, I would argue, in its attitude toward the Christian legacy, and toward the scope of the debt it owed to this legacy. The Enlightenment often affirmed the rights of autonomous reason, the principles of personal rights and tolerance, against ecclesiastical institutions—yet not against Christian tradition itself.

In this respect the Enlightenment was not unlike the Reformation and the earlier medieval heresies, which appealed to the Gospels in order to destroy the institutional and dogmatic framework of the Roman Church. And it was more than a matter of ideological blindness or political expediency. One may reasonably argue that modern liberal doctrines were historically rooted in the biblical belief that all human beings are equal, and equally precious. However tortuous and self-contradictory was the path from the religious meaning to the political meaning of this idea of equality, however often it was strewn with conflicts and struggles, it was historically real.

It has been largely forgotten by now. The ideas of religious tolerance and of the separation of church and state—and by extension, of ideology and the state—belong to the natural equipment of the republican tradition. They were established against clericalist, if not, strictly speaking, theocratic, forces in Christianity; and they won in Western civilization. They imply that no religious body is either privileged or discriminated against by law, that there is no compulsory religious teaching in public schools, that religious loyalties are irrelevant to the rights and duties of citizens, and so on. Deviations from the principle of the strict neutrality of the state are either largely ceremonial, like the status of the Anglican Church, or of little importance, like the special positions of churches in taxation and charity law in various countries.

Yet we may ask, to what extent can this religious and ideological neutrality of the state be consistently upheld? In democratic countries, ideas as well as religions are governed by the rules of the market: a consumer has countless possibilities for choice. But this freedom of producing, advertising, and distributing religious and ideological goods is itself a result of an ideological—and indirectly religious—option. If we believe that freedom is better than despotism, that slavery (i.e., the ownership of a person by another person or by the state) is contrary to the very notion of being human, that equality is right and that legally established privileges are unjust, that the spirit of religious tolerance ought to be supported and oppressive fanaticism opposed, we are not "neutral" in matters concerning basic values. Neither is a state that, in one form or another, inscribed those values into its constitutional framework. Otherwise it would be neutral toward its own neutrality, whereby the neutrality would defeat itself.

If such values are directly or indirectly of biblical origin, there is no reason why stating this would undermine the principle of separation. In terms of both its historical origin and its prevailing norms, it would be silly to say that any state within the realm of Western civilization, by being neutral, is non-Christian in the same sense that it is non-Moslem or non-Hindu. During the discussion last year in the United States about voluntary prayer in schools, one could not

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Leszek Kolakowski is a professor at the University of Chicago and a fellow at All Souls College, Oxford University. A slightly different version of this essay was given as the 15th annual Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities in Washington, D.C., in April.

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help being struck by the almost hysterical tenor of those who attacked permission for such prayers, as if allowing a few pupils to say the Lord's Prayer during a school break amounted to turning the country into a sinister theocracy.

To be sure, this particular issue is a part of a larger conflict that includes more serious issues such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as pressures from various intolerant or even fanatical religious groups. I believe that it would be advisable, however, to impose certain moderating restrictions on the general framework of debate about the relationship between politics and religious tradition.

IT IS undoubtedly true that over the last years we have been witnessing, in various regions of our planet, the growing role of religious bodies and ideas in political conflicts. This might be a result of increasing disappointment with dominant political ideologies inherited from before the First World War, when the political landscape seemed—rightly or wrongly—mild and promising by comparison with our own. It might stem from the natural need to have rules of conduct that are both simple and absolutely valid. It might be due in part to the simple fact that in many countries of the Third World the available political ideologies seem to be of little operational use, whereas the need for an ideologically grounded legitimacy for the existing power system is ever more pressing. While we may observe this process with alarm, it is fair to say that it has not produced any significant growth of theocratic tendencies in Christianity—in contrast to Islam, where this tendency (however explainable by the historical vicissitudes of Islamic faith and its content) is quite vigorous. To fear that the Western world is likely to fall prey to a totalitarian theocracy seems groundless. The opposite tendency, which reduces Christianity to a political ideology, thus cutting off its roots, appears instead fairly resilient.

The other side of the same political framework is this: we try to survive in a world torn asunder by a conflict that cannot be seen simply as a competition between big powers vying with each other to enlarge their respective areas of influence. It is a clash of civilizations, a clash that for the first time in history has assumed worldwide dimensions. However distasteful our civilization might be in some of its vulgar aspects, however

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enfeebled by hedonistic indifference, greed, and the decline of civic virtues, however torn by struggles and teeming with social ills, the most powerful reason for its unconditional defense (and I am ready to emphasize this adjective) is provided by its alternative. It faces the totalitarian civilization of Sovietism, and what is at stake is not only the destiny of one particular cultural form, but of humanity as we have known it—not because this new civilization is militaristic, imperialistic, and aggressive, but because of its educational goals, because it promises to convert human persons into perfectly replaceable parts of the impersonal state machine, each of them having no more reality than this machine is ready to confer on it, with no will, no ability to revolt, no critical thought of its own. While we may argue that this ideal is unattainable for reasons that are inherent in human nature (and that are revealed in the abysmal economic ineptitude of this civilization, and in its reluctant retreats and concessions), a strong movement toward it has already brought about unspeakable cultural disasters, and is likely to cause more.

I would go further and repeat what Karl Jaspers once wrote. Jaspers, who was extremely sensitive to religious intolerance and ideological fanaticism in the Christian tradition, said that if he had the distressing choice between Christian (he meant Catholic) and communist totalitarianism, he would opt for the former, because the spiritual source of Christianity, the Bible, is the source of European culture. Our civilization, therefore, would not lose its continuity, even in such an oppressive form, or be severed from its origins.

Needless to say, those of us whose minds have been shaped to a large extent by the Enlightenment, and who are not prepared to dismiss its legacy altogether, no matter how self-defeating it may appear, abhor the prospect of such a choice. Yet we might be wrong in thinking that it is no more than an abstractly concocted possibility. It is not imminent, to be sure, but it is not a fanciful or surrealistic vision either, considering the energy of the religious and political movements that make it conceivable.

II.

It has been the contention of many people that if we want to address the danger that our civilization may collapse into nihilistic sluggishness and become an easy prey for tyranny—address this danger, that is, with a broader historical perspective, rather than with specific political or military policies—the spiritual legacy of the Enlightenment calls for revision. There are indeed at least three crucial points in which humanist beliefs seem to have reached a suicidal stage.

THE FIRST IS the belief in so-called "absolute values." To sneer at "absolute values" has been extremely easy, of course, since the Enlightenment managed to convince us that all human beliefs about good and evil are culturally and historically relative, and that mankind had already suffered enough from struggles between various religions and doctrines whose adherents, on all sides, were deeply convinced of being the only privileged carriers of the absolute truth. Humanist skepticism, with its dismissal of "absolute values," forged a powerful weapon against the fanaticism of sectarian strife, and laid a foundation for the institutional framework of a pluralist and tolerant society.

It carried a danger, though. It made those very ideas of pluralism and tolerance as relative as their opposites. We have gotten used to shrugging off many horrors of our world by talking about cultural difference. "We have our values, they have theirs" is a saying we frequently hear when dealing with the atrocities of totalitarianism, or of other forms of despotism. Do those who say so really mean to say that it is pointless and arrogant to make value judgments about the difference between pluralistic forms of political life and societies in which the only known method of political competition is the slaughter of rivals? When we extend our generous acceptance of cultural diversity to include all the rules of good and evil, when we aver, for example, that the human rights idea is a European concept, unfit for and ungraspable in societies that share other traditions, do we mean that Americans rather dislike being tortured and packed into concentration camps, but Vietnamese, Iranians, and Albanians do not mind, or even enjoy, it? And if so, what is wrong with the racial laws of South Africa, and why shouldn't we be satisfied with saying that the Afrikaners simply "have their own values" and that we have no way to prove that ours are any better? Or, to put it crudely, shall we say that the difference between a vegetarian and a cannibal is just a matter of taste?

To be sure, we usually do not express our enlightened tolerance in such a daring manner, but this may be because we are reluctant to make explicit the consequence of our faith. It is easier to say vaguely that societies have various values, or that belief in absolute values is obsolete and naive, than clearly to admit that slavery is as good as freedom, granted that nothing is intrinsically good or evil. More often than not we are simply inconsistent, less for cognitive than for political reasons; we like to profess our relativistic complacency in cases that we prefer, because of our politics or because of our cowardice, to treat with civility, and to reserve our moral intransigence and "absolute values" for other cases. Thus it can be congenial to be moralists about South Africa but realpolitikers and courteous relativists about communist systems, or vice versa. Thus we convert our political commitments into moral principles. This is precisely what the idolatry of politics means: to fabricate gods for an ad hoc use in a game of political power.

I UNDERSTAND THAT to say this does not solve any particular issue. Nor does it imply, by any means, that moralistic inflexibility provides a good basis for all political decisions, or that one could infer the entire policy of a state, say, from the concept of human rights. This is clearly impracticable. In many decisions, alas, moral cost is inevitably involved. Bloodshed is always evil. But we have to admit that it is not the ultimate evil. All through history people have accepted bloodshed for good cause. It would be silly to decide that we ought to avoid bloodshed in all circumstances and at any price, for in some cases it is the only way to avoid worse calamities and greater bloodshed. This might be unpleasant to say in a world living in the shadow of a possible war and facing the daily horrors of terrorism, but it is trivially true all the same. The point is that we should be aware of our choices and call things by their names, which is infrequent in political conflicts. If we have no option of avoiding evil, at least we ought not avoid identifying it as such.

Again, to believe in intrinsically valid rules of good and evil *and* to admit that it is unfeasible to base political decisions exclusively on them does not settle any specific political issue. Still, there is nothing extravagant in a reflection that, with-

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out being directly useful in political affairs, aims to examine the nonpolitical sources of diseases that affect political life: not our technical inability to cope with problems, but rather our inability to handle problems that are not technical and not soluble by technical devices. And it is arguable that this inability of ours is a part of the mentality we inherited from the Enlightenment and even, one may say, from the best aspects of the Enlightenment—from its struggle against intolerance, self-complacency, superstitions, and the uncritical worship of tradition.

Even if the great masters of the Enlightenment did not necessarily unfold their relativistic ideas in a form that, as I am arguing, exerts a paralyzing influence on our current ability to oppose evil and intolerance, they planted a good seed that turned out to produce dangerous fruit. To deny "absolute values" for the sake of both rationalist principles and the general spirit of openness threatens our ability to make the distinction between good and evil altogether. To stretch tolerance to include fanaticism amounts to favoring the victory of intolerance. To abstain from fighting evil on the pretext that we are imperfect might convert our imperfection into barbarity.

III.

The second point at which we can notice a self-degrading movement of the Enlightenment is the uncertain and conceptually fragile status of human personality. The saying about the social nature of human creatures has been repeated for 23 centuries. Its meaning, however, is at least twofold: it might mean something trivially true, or something that is not only highly controversial in philosophical terms but, if generally accepted, very damaging, perhaps even disastrous, to our civilization.

It is, of course, trivially true that the language, knowledge, ways of thinking, emotions, and aspirations of each of us have been shaped by what we have experienced in the human environment; that we could not survive either physically or mentally without sharing our experience with others. Still, this platitude does not entail that the reality of each of us is entirely reducible to what others have given us, that apart from our participation in communal life, a human creature is literally nothing, as if each of us were only a collection of masks that are put on an empty space—as if there were no other humanity but collective humanity, no self save Rousseau's *"moi commun."* The belief in an irreducible and unique core of personality is not a scientifically provable truth (apart from its description in genetic terms), but the notion of personal dignity and of human rights is, without this belief, an arbitrary concoction, suspended in the void, indefensible, easy to be dismissed.

The belief that human beings are entirely society-made has a number of alarming consequences. Many people have noticed and investigated the erosion in contemporary civilization of both the concept of personal responsibility and the feeling of it. If "I" am not "I," if the word "I" is a pronoun to which no reality—at least no morally constituted reality—corresponds, if I am totally definable in the "objective" terms of social relationships, then indeed there is no reason why "I," rather than the abstraction "society," should be responsible for anything. I remember seeing on American television a young man who was convicted of brutally raping a little girl; his comment was that "everybody makes mistakes." And so now we know who raped the child: "everybody," that is, nobody. Shall we see a rapist suing society—that is, a school or a government—for being a rapist? Or a wife demanding that the government order her husband, who eloped with another woman, to love her again? There is no point in multiplying examples, as the general tendency to devolve the responsibility for individuals' acts (in particular their wrongdoings and shortcomings) on anonymous collective entities is well known and can be documented only too easily.

THERE IS a more sinister side to our inability to assert the separate, irreducible, ontological status of personality. It makes us conceptually defenseless in the face of totalitarian doctrines, ideologies, and institutions. We no longer have grounds for attributing to the human being an absolute and irreplaceable value, since he or she is no more than an expression of the impersonal aggregate; and therefore we have no grounds for opposing the idea that individuals are organs of the state and that all aspects of their lives, and life itself, are to be treated accordingly, that their worth is to be measured entirely by their usefulness to the state. On the same assumption, we are helpless in resisting those aspects of democracy that under some conditions are compatible with totalitarianism (for instance, the principle of majority conceived of as absolute rule).

The distinction between the personal and collective sides of our life takes on special significance in modernity, when it is politically expressed in two requirements, always distinct and sometimes limiting each other: participation in power on the one hand, and personal rights on the other. The right to participate in power, through democratic institutions, does not by itself assure the protection of personal rights. The latter, far from being an extension of the principle of majority, places limits on it, considering that personal rights can be suppressed with the approval of the majority, and a despotic or even totalitarian order that enjoys the majority's support not only is conceivable, but can be actually illustrated by examples. A society shattered by despair and dread, thrown into panic, can look for a solution in a tyranny that robs individuals, including those who support it, of personal rights. A majority gave power to Hitler, to Khomeini, perhaps to Mao, if not always by active assistance then by passive submission. In the normal course of things, all the revolutions that establish a tyranny end in a bitter hangover very soon, but usually too late for people to shake off the self-imposed yoke.

Perhaps we should argue that guarding personal rights is more important in our world than defending the system of participation in power. If personal rights can be brought to ruin with the active or acquiescent support of the majority, the reverse is true, too: personal rights can be protected where there may be very little participation in power. We can adduce examples, in various historical periods and countries, of mild autocracies or oligarchies where participation in power was restricted to a tiny privileged section of the population, where no universal suffrage existed, and yet where personal rights were protected, if not perfectly, then reasonably well—and where people normally did not fall prey to lawless brutality, where the law was enforced and cultural life suffered no severe restrictions.

The most superficial glance at European history can convince us that life in a nondemocratic order does not need to be an unceasing horror, that individuals (rich as well as poor) can survive reasonably well and arts can flourish, that an autocracy can be, if not quite generous, at least not cruel. To support this line of

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argument, some people argue that participation in the democratic process is largely illusory, or is reduced—as the much-underrated French thinker Jacques Ellul says—to what is called political "commitment," which means nothing but the surrender of one's own will to professional politicians. Moreover, in democratic countries, according to many signs, the degree of identification of people with the government they brought to power in free elections is not impressively high.

THESE ARGUMENTS are probably reasonable, but they are only half of the truth. The other half is that, while we can find examples of benign autocratic or aristocratic orders, they come from the past, not the present. Benevolent tyrannies, enlightened and tenderhearted autocracies, are not in existence any longer. Perhaps they have become culturally impossible, for reasons we can only speculate upon. Power has always been desired and sought as a good in itself, not only as a tool to gain other benefits; but the idea that everyone has a right to participate in power is of relatively recent origin, and it so much belongs to the ideological armory of modernity that it is verbally admitted even in the most hideously despotic regimes. Once it has been established, it cannot be canceled. The participation in power in a democratic process, however dubious it might appear to individuals (who often perceive in it a proof of their own helplessness, rather than a device whereby they can influence events), is finally the only reliable defense against despotism and therefore, in our world, a necessary condition for the protection of personal rights as well as cultural pluralism.

It is not a sufficient condition, however; and therefore it is important to keep in mind that personal rights set limits on democratic principles rather than being their natural consequence. And personal rights are defensible, in turn, only on the assumption that there is a realm of personal reality that is definable in moral, not biological, terms. They have to be vindicated on moral grounds, much as their implementation depends on political conditions. In a world in which everything has become politicized, it is important to repeat the time-honored truism that political goals have to be assessed in terms that are not political. This truism carries perhaps more weight today, when there is no agreement even on the most general framework of political ends, and no one can define in a noncontroversial manner what the Aristotelian "good life" as a political objective means. We have been taught by long experience that basic goods which we might be ready to approve conflict with each other: security and freedom, freedom and equality, equality and personal rights, personal rights and the rule of majority.

Moreover, personal rights, insofar as they include the right of property, inevitably conflict with the idea of distributive justice. It would be futile to assert both without qualification. The normative notion implying that all people are entitled to have a share in the wealth of nature and the fruits of civilization, that they may make claims to a minimally decent life, that the institutions of the welfare state are to be upheld as a matter of justice, not merely of political necessity, is incompatible with everyone's right to enjoy legally acquired property.

In vain do we repeat slogans that mix up all our "values," as if we knew how to implement them jointly. When we say, for example, "peace and justice," we have always to bear in mind that 40 years of peace in Europe have been based on glaring injustice, on the enslavement of central and eastern parts of the continent. However precarious and unstable this peace (in the sense of the sheer ab-

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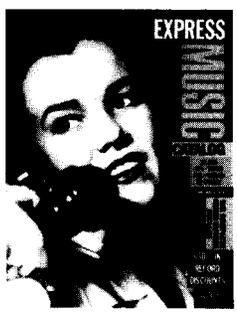

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sence of war) might be, it has been preserved for four decades. And so, when we use generalities like "peace and justice" as an expression of our good wishes, more often than not we simply avoid real issues and real choices.

Thus we are summoned back to Max Weber's classic distinction between the ethics of intention and the ethics of responsibility. A politician's good intentions clearly do not count in his performance. He is assessed according to his skills in foreseeing the foreseeable—and often, the unforeseeable—consequences of his actions. We cannot avoid the notorious fact, however disagreeable, that acts which we are ready to deem noble when performed by an individual for moral reasons might be not only inexcusable but disastrous when they are converted into political acts, let alone into rules of politics.

THOSE PACIFISTS of old who, on religious or moral grounds, refused to carry the sword but were ready to serve as stretcher-bearers or nurses, and therefore to share the dangers of soldiers, deserved full respect. They proved that their refusal was morally motivated, rather than a search for safety. Those pacifists who today act as political bodies have to be assessed by political criteria, that is, by their ability to calculate the consequences of their actions and not by their intention to secure peace—as though anybody might now wish to provoke a global war. If one may reasonably argue that their actions make war more, rather than less, likely (as, I believe, is the case with the advocates of unilateral disarmament in Europe), they have to be judged accordingly. Still, the intended consequences, whether they actually materialize or not, obviously have to be judged as well by nonpolitical criteria. Otherwise efficiency in pursuing any goal, however hideous, would remain the sole measure.

The Enlightenment tradition accustomed us to the belief that all the pillars on which human hope for a good world rested—freedom, justice, equality, peace, brotherhood, prosperity, abundance—can be built jointly and simultaneously in a harmonious progression. Very few of us can now stand by this belief or take it seriously. European liberals and socialists who spread this faith were time and again accused by conservatives of a failure to perceive the inherent evil in human affairs, or to explain it; they saw evil, according to this criticism, as a technical blunder, something contingent that could be eradicated by adequate social technology. Liberals and socialists, in turn, accused conservatives of using the doctrine of ineradicable evil as a pretext to oppose all reforms that could make our lot more tolerable and reduce human suffering. There is some justice in both charges. For that reason it is probably safer for us that progressives and conservatives coexist in unremitting conflict than that one of those irreconcilable mentalities should gain the definitive victory.

IV.

The third point at which the legacy of the Enlightenment has had destructive consequences is the erosion of historical consciousness. I do not refer, of course, to historical research, which is flourishing and apparently in robust health. Nor do I refer to historicism as a philosophical doctrine, which has grown as an ideological device since the end of the 18th century. I do not even mean the amount of historical knowledge people get in schools or from books and television. I have in mind, rather, the progressive decline of awareness that our spiritual life includes the sediment of the historical past, as its real and active component, and that we must perceive the past as a never-fading frame of reference for our actions and thinking. (That our life actually does include this component and hinges on this frame of reference might be the case without our being aware of it.) It is the withering away of this awareness that I am getting at.

That is, of course, hardly a novel worry; by broaching it I do not pretend to discover new continents. But it is a worry worth discussing as we usher in an epoch when children, from the earliest age, will sit at computers, their minds entirely shaped by acts of calculation, with historical self-understanding sinking into irrelevance or oblivion.

The muse of history is gentle, learned, and unassuming, but when neglected and deserted she takes her revenge, and blinds those who scorn her.

Since Descartes, an important trend of Enlightenment thinking shrugged off the historically defined notion of human existence, for obvious reasons. First, because it appeared irrelevant to the progress of science, technology, and the future happiness of mankind. (Is not the past, after all, a huge mass of irrational passions, of ignorance and foolish mistakes?) Second, because respect for history included the worship of tradition as such, the veneration of what is old and established for no better reason than that it is old and established. According to this mentality, it is we, the moderns, who are old, whereas the ancients were children—as many thinkers, since Bacon, have claimed—and there is no point for the elderly to look for wisdom in the minds of infants. What profit, apart from entertainment, is there in knowing that Zerubbabel begat Abiud and Claudius was done in by Agrippina?

TO BE SURE, hardly anyone today expresses the rationalist contempt for history in such a simplistic fashion. But the natural disposition of the rationalist mind seems to have gained the upper hand over historical curiosity in general education, and in the mental habits of modernity. We have been told time and again that we do not learn from history. This saying, too, is trivially true in one sense, and perniciously false in another. It is true in the sense that historical events and situations are by definition unique; the historical process is made up of countless accidents, unrepeatable coincidences, disparate forces unpredictably interfering with each other. Apart from commonsense platitudes, we cannot acquire from historical studies any useful rules of conduct that would be applicable in new situations. A politician—to take a Machiavellian example—does not need to study the vicissitudes of Roman emperors to discover that he cannot rely on the unconditional loyalty of people he has promoted. And to be aware that lost wars are likely to provoke domestic upheavals, we can do without immersing ourselves in the history of modern Russia.

To derive from such observations a general principle to the effect that "we do not learn from history," however, would imply that historical knowledge would be useful only if it provided us with technical guidance that we could apply in governing, in vying for power, in warfare—not unlike consulting a manual to repair a broken vacuum cleaner. Since historical studies are demonstrably futile in this sense, it might be said, they are worthless *tout court*. This manipulative, purely technical approach to the past is a natural consequence of the general rationalist view of life, and it could do grave damage to our civilization.

We learn history not in order to

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know how to behave or how to succeed, but to know who we are. And what matters is not the scope of our learning. From a good historical film about, say, Richard III, I can learn more than I have ever known on the subject, and even with some accuracy. But my newly acquired knowledge is a matter of amusement, and in terms of my mental life it does not differ from the "knowledge" I gain from a purely fictitious thriller. Educated (and even uneducated) people in pre-industrial societies, whose historical learning was very meager, were perhaps more historical—in the sense I mean here—than we are. The historical tradition in which they lived was woven of myths, legends, and orally transmitted stories of which the material accuracy more often than not was dubious. Still, it was good enough to give them the feeling of life within a continuous religious, national, or tribal community, to provide them with the kind of identity that made life ordered (or "meaningful"). In this sense it was a living thing, and it taught people why, and for what, they were responsible, as well as how this responsibility was to be practically taken up.

IT WOULD be difficult, on the other hand, to refute the objection that history, conceived not as an object of scientific inquiry, as a mundane knowledge, but rather as an imperative force tying people together through an awareness of common destiny and common responsibilities, is bound to be mythological history—unquestionable and immune to rational scrutiny. Moreover, historical myths have usually confined their power to tribal or national entities. Universal history—either as a framework for our mental life or even as a reality—has only just begun to emerge. What come the closest to all-encompassing, meaning-generating social memory have been the myths of universal religions, but none of them has proved capable of becoming truly universal. Buddha and Jesus have certainly provided mankind with a memory of events of universal significance, not restricted to any tribal perception; but even the powerful radiation of those events has broken the resistance of tribal self-containment only to a small extent. And while historical self-understanding has the virtue of giving a sense of cohesion to a particular community, it has the vice of dividing the human race as a whole.

I realize that this might sound like old reactionary prattle. It is old. It was not new when Georges Sorel taunted the utopian dreamers who, ignorant of historical realities, were building in imagination their world of perfection. It was not new when Dostoyevsky scoffed at the apostles of progress who hated history because they hated life itself. It was not even new when Burke argued (in part against Paine) that all legitimate social contracts involve past generations. But whoever is interested in, and worrying about, the spiritual fragility of young people cannot deny that the erosion of a historically defined sense of "belonging" plays havoc with their lives, and threatens their ability to withstand possible trials of the future.

AND WE HAVE reasons to worry about the decline of historical awareness in a more specific and politically more pertinent sense. A manipulative and rationalist (as distinct from "rational") approach to historical knowledge is an organic part of the general belief that the potential of social technology is unlimited, that society is "in principle" as malleable as any material, that we can step-by-step eliminate chance from historical processes as efficiently as we eliminate it from our machines, that, if we are clever enough and benevolent enough, we can, by employing those technological skills, produce a society without evil and hostilities, without scarcity and suffering, without frustration and failures.

Once we let ourselves be convinced of the idea that the past is pointless because it fails to provide us with reliable prescriptions for solving any specific current problems, we fall into a paradoxical trap. On the one hand, by losing a clear awareness of the continuity of culture and thus losing a historical frame of reference for our issues, we lose the ground on which those issues can be properly stated at all. On the other hand, we easily imagine that the past, ignored or reduced to nothingness, is not a real obstacle to our dreams of perfection, that political technique, properly improved, can reach the point of near-omnipotence, that all human worries are soluble by political means.

To expect that chance can be removed from social processes—and that history can be simply canceled—is a deadly illusion. To believe that human brotherhood is a political "problem" amounts to imitating the Saint-Simonists of old, who designed special jackets that were but-

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toned from the back, so that nobody could dress or undress without the help of others—this was supposed to promote universal fraternity. It is reasonable to hope that various forms of human suffering can be successfully fought against, that hunger can be overcome and the cures for some diseases can be found; but to imagine that scarcity as such will be eradicated is to defy all historical experience, because scarcity is defined by wants, and human wants can grow indefinitely. In all those hopes we perceive, again, the spirit of idolatry.

There are no "laws of history," but there are layers of reality—climatic, demographic, technical, economic, psychological, intellectual—which change and move at a different pace, combining their energies in an irregular way and surprising us time and again with unexpected extravagances and caprices. Historical knowledge cannot prevent those surprises from occurring. It gives no clues for predicting the unpredictable. But it can protect us, at least, against foolish hopes, and reveal the limits of our efforts—limits defined by physical and cultural constants, by permanent aspects of human nature, by nature itself, and by the burden of tradition.

The conditions of political competition are so tough that professional politicians and statesmen have no time or energy to spare for disinterested study; they restrict their knowledge to what might be useful and relevant to their day-to-day preoccupations and cannot afford to keep the kind of distance from current events that a larger historical perspective might help them to acquire. Of course, those few politicians of the last decades who were on more intimate terms with the historical past—such as de Gaulle and Churchill—were not protected against making blunders. But if their influence was more profound and longer-lasting, that was perhaps due to their sturdy awareness of living within, and being limited by, a continuous historical stream.

IN THE THREE areas in which, as I have tried to argue, the ambiguities of our cultural heritage have matured into immobilizing self-contradictions, we cannot be comforted, alas, by a hope of discovering a well-balanced *juste milieu*. The choice between belief or disbelief in "absolute values" is often offered to us as a choice between fanatical intransigence and nihilistic indifference. To assert or to dismiss the intrinsic and irreducible value of personal life might easily mean either simply rejecting the idea of distributive justice or yielding to the totalitarian temptation, that is to say, accepting either the unacceptable sides of liberalism or the unacceptable sides of collectivism. To experience the historical dimension of our life as a source of meaning or to deny the validity of this experience often amounts either to going back to the inert romantic worship of the mythological past, or to decreeing that history as such is irrelevant and thus demolishing all nonutilitarian grounds of communal life. And, finally, to state that one is "in between" these options, or that one has reconciled them in a "synthetic" view, is easy in general terms and difficult when detailed choices have to be made; many are tempted instead simply to adhere to two irreconcilable extremes simultaneously.

In making political decisions and in developing attitudes, people could appeal to divine law, to natural law and the theory of social contract, or to the feeling of historical continuity of which they are agents even if they revolt against it. It appears that we are about to lose all three of these reference points. Thus we either reduce politics to the technical rules of success, or try to dissolve our existence in a mindless and fanatical devotion of one kind or another, or escape from life into a variety of self-stunning devices. Perhaps we can be cured, but not painlessly.

It may be objected that what I have said could well borrow the title from the famous treatise of Abelard: *Sic et non.* I would be hard put to rebut this charge, except to say that *Sic et non* is a suitable title for most of the stuff our mind is made of.

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND DANISH

Reversal of Fortune: Inside the von Bülow Case
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(Random House, 276 pp., $19.95)

Back when the media trembled with the question of whether Claus von Bülow did or did not inject his wife, Sunny, with an overdose of insulin to acquire her money and marry his mistress, the gossip columnist Liz Smith announced to her New York television viewers that as a young boy von Bülow had participated in the wedding party of Hermann Goering. "I know it's boring," said Miss Smith after just the right pause. "But we get so few social notes from the Third Reich these days." If Miss Smith thought that her item about von Bülow was boring, she would be heartened by reading Alan M. Dershowitz's book. The exciting, character-probing analysis of the Danish noble womanizing leather-trousered God-knows-what may yet be written. But what readers must settle for in Dershowitz's book is an account of several successful legal maneuvers, which is interesting, and an account of Dershowitz's sense of himself, which is not. Well, the Alan Dershowitz story is sort of interesting, but not as its hero intended.

In every book by an author who is less concerned with his subject than with his involvement with it, there appears at least one centrally revelatory passage that defies either common or editorial sense. In *Reversal of Fortune* that passage appears on the book jacket, in the author's identification blurb: "At Yale Law School he was first in his class." No statement like that gets on a book jacket without the author's wanting it there. And if you read it (as I did) before you read the book and then try to picture the kind of person who treasures being first in his class and wants the world to know it, you can bet that from cover to cover all your fears are about to be realized.

And realized they are: in a short footnote early on ("For a discussion of why I defend guilty clients, see my book *The Best Defense*"); in a long footnote a little later that smirks with self-amusement, explaining why Dershowitz and his secretary filed documents on the von Bülow case under "The Fonz"; in the explanation of an elementary reference to *Rashomon* and to the shopworn Chekhovian advice about not showing a gun unless you plan to use it; in latently

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self-advertising questions ("*Who* had injected Sunny with insulin: Did she inject herself? Or did her husband do it?"). Patiently, one must wait a full 50 pages before getting to the heart of the matter, in which Dershowitz recounts how he, a poor but plucky Jewish boy from a working-class neighborhood in Brooklyn, made it all the way from Brooklyn College to Yale Law School, "which admitted only 150 students a year from all over the world," including "descendants of the wealthiest families in America," progeny of "Supreme Court Justices, governors, senators," and (yes) "captains of industry."

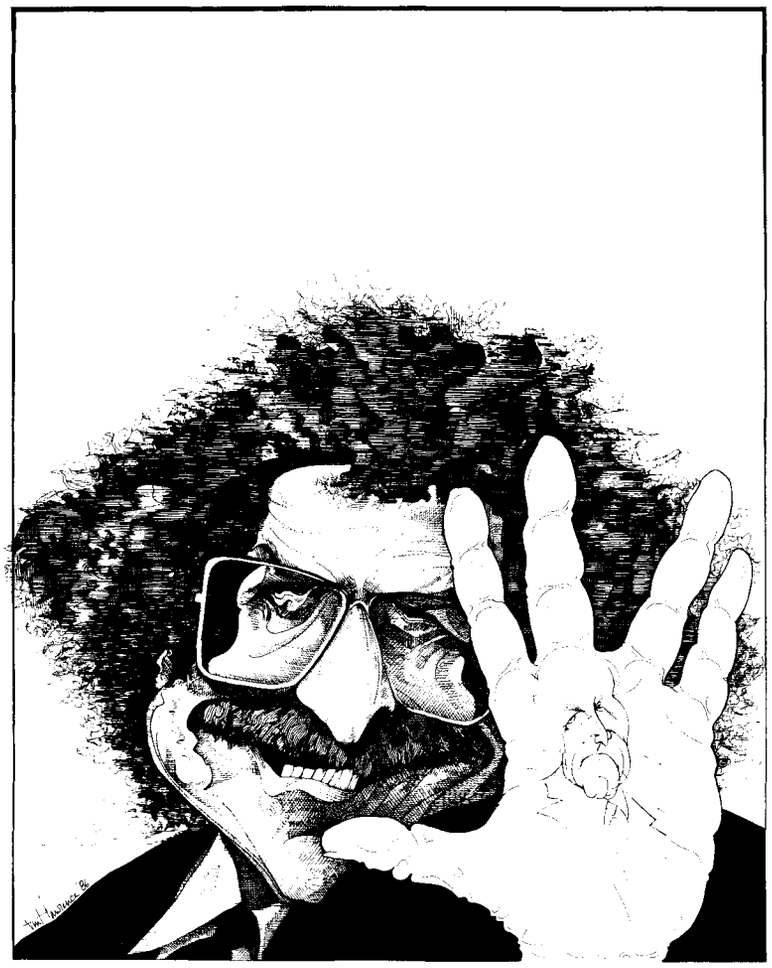
The ostensible purpose of this biographical sketch is to prepare us for the clash of cultures that occurs when Dershowitz first meets his client at the von Bülow apartment on Fifth Avenue. In his youth, Dershowitz had only passed by "the elegant mansions along Fifth Avenue on my way to and from the museums." But now at last:

> I approached the entrance to 960 Fifth Avenue. The uniformed doorman anticipated my introduction by saying, "Professor Dershowitz, Mr. von Bülow is expecting you," and sending me to the wood-paneled elevator, which took me to the von Bülow floor. As I left the elevator, I felt I was in a different world. The two hallways I passed through to get into the sitting room (which led into the enormous living room) were decorated with museum pieces. Marble, silver and gold were the dominant materials; open space—both depth and height—was the dominant feeling; opulence was the dominant impression. I noticed immediately one striking difference between von Bülow's home and mine: the Fifth Avenue apartment had no aromas of home cooking, no smells, no odors. There was no sense that his home was lived in, loved in, eaten in, slept in. It was a museum.

Doormen in uniform? Elevators that stop precisely at the floor requested? How rich can you get? This Alan in Wonderland attitude is nonsense for one of Harvard's law school professors, who from time to time actually do meet people in sitting rooms, with both depth and height. The pose seems particularly peculiar for Dershowitz, who later in the book playfully mentions his 12-room home on Cambridge's Brattle Street, compared to which Fifth Avenue is nouveau museum. Perhaps Dershowitz cooks in all 12 rooms.

As the narrative progresses, the author continues to remind us of his humble origins, using Yiddishisms to define things already adequately defined in English. He also persists in reminding us of his valuable first book, in case we missed the footnote, and he frequently assures us that he is not only bright as a penny but honest as the day is long, announcing that the old-boy network "is not my way of practicing law" and "my teaching schedule always comes first." He cites newspaper and magazine articles about his toughness. Explaining that von Bülow did not want him to appear at the appeals trial (because his first team of lawyers objected), Dershowitz lets us know that "hundreds of defendants beg me to go to court in their behalf." He shows his love of sports, as any well-rounded intellectual must do. After he wins his case, he can no longer contain his modesty: "the jury rendered its verdict heard round the world."

From the above selections one might conclude that Dershowitz lacks humor. Yet *Reversal of Fortune* fairly heaves with jokes intended to display not only the author's sense of fun, but that of his sons and of von Bülow himself. Called by Dershowitz "something of a clown," von Bülow entertains us by repeating jokes made about the trials: "What do you call fear of insulin? Claustrophobia." "What do you give a wife who has everything for Christmas? An injection of insulin." Delightful, no? Then there are the hilarities that Dershowitz and von Bülow invent together, naming foods the "Warren Burger" and the "Felix Frankfurter." (Dershowitz is kind enough to explain such references.) A student of Dershowitz quipped in reference to von Bülow's allegedly incriminating black satchel that an assured legal victory was "in the bag." Dershowitz instructs us that this is an example of double entendre.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Hiding among all this gaiety, in fact, is a terrifying and melancholy story of a purposeless wealthy family, its members drifting like ghosts among their possessions, Sunny von Bülow's life-in-death form presiding over the lot of them. But this story must be felt and guessed at, since Dershowitz would have us focus only on him and the trials. Fair enough. On the occasions when Dershowitz neglects his autobiography, he provides a clear and well-ordered account of a first-rate defense. After Dershowitz does his work, it is hard to resist his case that the insulin injection on which the initial verdict of guilty hung did not occur at all. No injection, no murder. As for the

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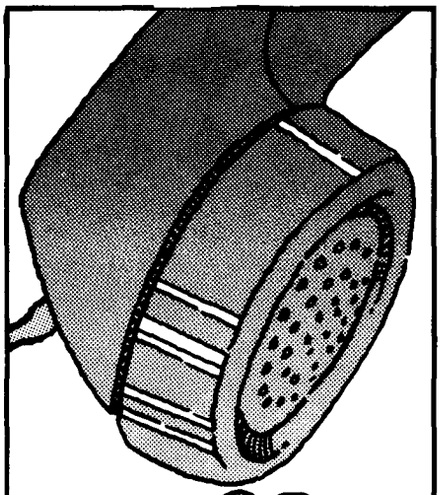

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incriminating vial of pills found in the black bag, it seems to have been placed in the bag, not simply discovered there, thus suggesting a frame-up. What appears to have happened is that Sonny von Bülow overloaded her brain with drugs and medicine and put her life in the coma toward which, sadly, it seemed headed for years. One's faith in all this is due wholly to Dershowitz's clear-sightedness and zeal.

He has more to his credit. At least as interesting as the story of the legal tactics and strategies involved in von Bülow's three trials are Dershowitz's asides on when to let a defendant take the stand and when not to; on the reliability of witnesses' memories; on the permissible and impermissible issues in appellate cases. Almost in spite of Dershowitz's salutes to his own boldness and aggressiveness, a picture of genuine persistence and thoroughness emerges. He convinces us of his commitment to the task of freeing his client and of his ability to see problems afresh. The fact is that Dershowitz is still a very good student: bright, effective, and prepared. It says something for Dershowitz's lawyerly skills that this impression manages to survive the author's studious cultivation of it.

What, then, possesses a person of such abilities to write a story the way Dershowitz has chosen to? It would be easy enough to suggest cynicism. One assumes he'll make a bundle off his book, which is also a flier for his future services. A movie is already in the works, about which Dershowitz has publicly expressed joy. But nobody can intentionally portray himself as so irritating a character without an awful lot of innocence—an astonishing amount for a crafty lawyer like Dershowitz. One is forced to believe he really thinks he comes off as likable in his book.

If this were merely an individual blunder, it would just be further proof of the power of self-deception. But Dershowitz's type of self-promotion seems to be growing into an American subgenre, favored by horn-tooters like Lee Iacocca who have persuaded themselves that their own self-wrought reversals of fortune are somehow tied to the fate of the nation. Dershowitz is not the self-serving patriot that Iacocca is, but both men clearly see themselves in the best tradition of American drive and desire. They are forever first in their class, strutting their stuff, with seemingly no awareness that to the rest of us they simply look like show-offs.

ROGER ROSENBLATT

Roger Rosenblatt, author of *Children of War* (Anchor Press/Doubleday), is an essayist for *Time* and the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour."

MUDDLING AFTER MAO

After the Nightmare
by Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro

(Knopf, 240 pp., $16.95)

Liang Heng is the author of an extraordinary autobiography, *Son of Revolution*, written with his wife, Judith Shapiro, in 1983, two years after his arrival in the United States. A memoir of a young man growing up in the turmoil of Mao's China, it described movingly and powerfully the damage done by a totalitarian state to the individual, his family, his friends, and by implication to society in general. *After the Nightmare*, based on a return visit to China in 1985, is in part a sequel to that memoir; it describes what has happened to Liang's family and friends under the post-Mao leadership of Deng Xiaoping. It is also an account of the reforms that the Chinese leadership is carrying out.

In the context of the history of the People's Republic of China, the changes are "revolutionary." The communes have been de-collectivized into individual family farms. The state-run economy allows private enterprise and market socialism, and the increase in earning power has enabled ordinary citizens to buy consumer goods, which are plentiful. Yet beneath the surface of this economic dy-

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namism, Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro depict an irrepressible tragic past: Maoist practices persist, and some of the worst features of the traditional system have reemerged. Theirs is a picture of a changing, yet changeless, China.

LIANG VISITS his father, who returned under Deng to the journalist unit from which he had been purged during the Cultural Revolution. Yet now, physically and psychologically broken, he is unable to work. This is a sad but accurate commentary on the older generation of intellectuals, who for almost 20 years were victims of the party as well as of Mao's incessant political campaigns. Liang visits his own generation of former Red Guards, now in their late 30s. Although they rebelled against authority during the Cultural Revolution, they have become China's yuppies—business entrepreneurs, TV executives, economic reformers. The Cultural Revolution produced violence and heartbreak, but it also produced a generation of youth ready to ask questions, pose challenges. Now they, like virtually everyone else Liang encounters, parrot the Deng reformist line. Despite all they suffered, both as victimizers and as victims, during the Cultural Revolution, Liang's friends want to become members of the party that allowed such a tragedy to occur, because that is the way they can move ahead in the system.

When Liang returns to the village where he and his father were sent for labor reform during the Cultural Revolution, the farmers, who could barely feed themselves then, now serve him large quantities of rice, cabbage, and fish. After decades of living in fear of the arbitrary power of the local party officials, they have control over their own lives. Though they rent their plots from the state, they, and not the party, now decide what and when to plant, and where and at what price they will sell their produce. They can engage in all kinds of occupations on the side—working in fisheries, construction, sewing cooperatives—to boost their income.

Their only contact with officials comes when they have to pay taxes, and here some of the worst characteristics of the old society reemerge. How much tax one pays is determined by personal connections with the tax collectors. If one has the "right" connections, known as *guanxi*, one thrives; if one does not, one suffers. The government intrudes more radically and impersonally by imposing the unpopular policy of the one-child family. Because of tradition—in rural China, a daughter marries into her husband's family, thus leaving her own parents without help on the farm and uncared for in their old age—the side effects of the policy have been appalling: a return to female infanticide and the beating and divorcing of wives who give birth to girls.

In the urban areas, there are also signs of change everywhere, especially in the rise of a service economy, mostly in the form of small, privately owned enterprises ranging from shoe repair to restaurants. Here, too, connections are crucial—in getting a license to establish the enterprise, as well as in obtaining goods. Liang and Shapiro lament the corruption and opportunism of officials' children who have used their connections to become the core of a new urban, commercial class. But opportunism flourished under Mao as well, only it was more selective and less open. At least now more people can participate, even those once labeled political enemies and deprived of a place in society.

Officials may be less visible in the countryside, but they still interfere everywhere in the urban areas. Their talent there, Liang and Shapiro say, is to say "No." Governmental meddling has

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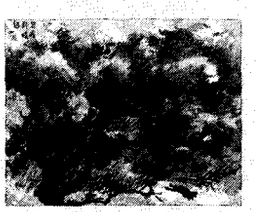

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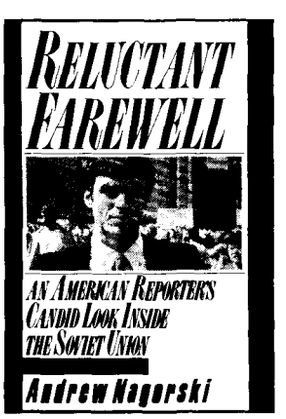

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proved to be a more fundamental problem than corruption in the course that reform has taken. As has been true throughout Chinese history, there are as yet no legal institutions to protect a private enterprise. If an enterprise becomes successful, the owner has no way to prevent officials from taking it over. Liang and Shapiro describe a parking lot near a tourist site, run by a farmers' cooperative, which made so much money that the local officials decided to use it for their own purposes. The cooperative could not turn to the courts or to a party commission set up to investigate such injustices, because the same officials staffed these institutions. The cooperative sought to appeal its case in the party newspaper in the hope of catching the attention of the top reformers in Beijing, but the paper was unresponsive. Thus the cooperative was forced to hand over the main source of its income to the local officials. As long as there are no autonomous legal institutions, as long as there is no separation of powers, there will be no way to safeguard what the Chinese term "the sprouts" of private enterprise now emerging.

The intellectuals—the most abused victims of the Cultural Revolution—are now given respect, responsibility, some independence in their work, and access to the outside world. They can engage in nonpolitical pursuits and experiment with literary and artistic styles. Yet here again remnants of the past, particularly the Maoist past, weaken the liberalization, especially for literary intellectuals. Liang and Shapiro tell of a young writer, Jia Pingao, who wrote of the violence and vindictiveness of the Cultural Revolution without showing the party leading the nation out of darkness into light. For his sins of omission, he became one of the targets of the "spiritual pollution" campaign against Western influence in late 1983 and early 1984.

Compared with the physical attacks and public humiliation that were widespread during the Cultural Revolution, the personal and newspaper criticisms leveled during the "spiritual pollution" campaign seem mild. Moreover, this time no other writer was willing to join in criticizing Jia Pingao, until the party found an editor-friend who supplied ritualistic criticism. In the Maoist era, anyone singled out as a target by officials was immediately attacked by all of his colleagues as well. In the Maoist period, in short, Jia Pingao would have become a nonperson. This time he was unable to publish for a brief time, but he continued to write. Like his Soviet counterparts, he put his work in his desk drawer and waited for the opportunity to publish again. Thus intellectuals may be repressed for a while, but they are not completely silenced.

Under Deng, the periodic tightening of controls over intellectuals has not been accompanied by the mass mobilization and violence of the Maoist period, and Deng has promised the intellectuals they will never again be subjected to comparable campaigns. Still, the campaigns continue. Intellectuals are still criticized and forced to write self-criticisms when what they say or do diverges from the party line. The external pressure has been eased a bit (as Jia Pingao's experience shows), but the internal pressure—a deeply ingrained self-censorship—still persists.

CHINA'S writers, as well as outside observers, often ask why China has been unable to produce the great literature that the Russian and East European writers have produced under similar circumstances of repression. In addition to political constraints, Liang and Shapiro explain that China labors under another limitation lacking in those societies. According to Chinese tradition, educated people, the literati, view themselves as implementers of government policies. Even when they criticize, they criticize to improve the existing system. Although they may have a relatively independent vision, they employ it for political purposes. Thus Liang and Shapiro look to younger Chinese writers—who are less entrenched in that tradition and who have begun to explore personal relationships and literary styles in their works—as the potential creators of contemporary China's great works. These less politically oriented writers may introduce a new tradition, although in a society as politicized as the People's Republic of China still is, the very act of rejecting political interference in one's creative work is a political statement.

Self-censorship not only inhibits the creation of great literature, it also inhibits all intellectual endeavor. The campaigns of the post-Mao era have been directed against literary intellectuals, but that does not mean that they do not affect China's highly prized scientists and engineers. After all, the Cultural Revolution began with an attack on writers that expanded to include all intellectuals, even scientists in the defense industries. In fact, the Cultural Revolution continues to haunt all areas of Chinese life. The Deng leadership insists that China must put this tragedy behind it and concentrate on economic modernization. The people with whom Liang talks are resilient and seemingly energetic in carrying out Deng's decrees, but they also suffer from a gnawing pain that does not go away.

One mother tells of her daughter who committed suicide during the Cultural Revolution because she was forced to criticize her mother. Her mother lives alone in her misery. A student who beat his teacher assuages his guilt by taking care of the teacher in the teacher's old age. Their lives are shaped by these feelings of despair, alienation, and guilt as much as by their supposed enthusiasm for reform. Liang and Shapiro long for what they regard as the positive legacy of the Cultural Revolution: the willingness to challenge authority. But they see only the reemergence of the traditional obedience to authority. Still, this positive legacy remains among an elite of humanist intellectuals, who identify with the reform leaders but challenge them when they retreat to Maoist and traditional practices.

AFTER THE NIGHTMARE is not a systematic, analytical description of Deng's economic, political, and cultural reforms. It is subjective, impressionistic, and episodic. Moreover, Shapiro and Liang's stories of other people's tragedies lack the power and emotion of Liang's own story. Yet the book is insightful, informative, and balanced. Even though Liang wants to maintain good relations with his homeland and its leaders, he does not appear to censor himself. Almost everyone he spoke with expressed fear of what will happen when that "short guy," their affectionate name for the four-foot-11-inch Deng Xiaoping, "goes to see

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God," as Deng calls it. Much has changed, but as this book reveals, much remains the same, including the power of individual leaders as well as traditions to shape events. Liang and Shapiro show us that the "short guy" has indeed dispelled some of the darkness, but that one individual or a few individual reformers are not enough to ensure that the darkness will not return, that the light will continue to shine.

MERLE GOLDMAN

Merle Goldman teaches Chinese history at Boston University. Her most recent book is *China's Intellectuals: Advise and Dissent* (Harvard University Press).

RHYTHMS OF CHILDHOOD

Boston Boy
by Nat Hentoff

(Knopf, 176 pp., $15.95)

The charm of *Boston Boy* lies in the anecdotal ease—an intuitive sense of pacing and emotional range—that Nat Hentoff brings to his diverse stories of a boyhood among the goyim in Roxbury. Though he is known primarily as a jazz critic and civil rights essayist, he shows here a thoroughly engaging talent as a raconteur, and *Boston Boy* works on its most directly appealing level as a fondly rendered series of reminiscences.

Yet there is also a buried narrative that emerges from the rapid-fire remembrances, unfolding in only the vaguest chronological order. It is a strange story, strange in how little Hentoff himself actually figures in it. He keeps a civil distance—sometimes too civil and too distant—between the incidents of his youth and his own soul. *Boston Boy* is not a particularly revealing memoir. But in its reticence is to be found an offbeat, seductive power; the effect might be described as a kind of dub autobiography, in the reggae sense of "dub"—the lead voice is hauntingly absent here, and we are left with the hypnotic, surrounding background rhythms and echoes of one man's formative years.

Those years were spent in Boston—in Roxbury and on Hemenway Street in the Back Bay. The city—"so much admired by those who have never lived there," as Hentoff piquantly puts it—comes vividly to life in the book. It was, it seems, not a pretty place, at least for a Jewish kid during the 1930s and 1940s. The provincial ugliness of the town, its vicious prejudices and what Robert Lowell called its "savage servility," spurred Hentoff's iconoclasm. He turned away from his own family, from his religious community, from the sway of snobbery at the Boston Latin School he attended, and found among the political radicals and jazz musicians who befriended him a liberating exile.

This conflict—between a first-generation Orthodox kid and the calcified communities of a divided city—is the central story running through *Boston Boy*. Typically, Hentoff recounts it only indirectly, through the individuals that shaped his hopes and ideals—the Irishers and anarchists, herring men and cornetists, gonifs and goyim who paraded past a very curious and slightly graceless boy, a boy we never quite come to know. But there are so many characters in this small book, and they are so often drawn with such quickness and clarity, that the city, finally, plays a kind of choric role against which Hentoff sings, in a voice strained of nearly all lyricism or sentimentality, a monody of dissent.

Dissenting came naturally to him; he was a precocious protester. When he was 12 years old, for instance, he observed Yom Kippur (in an old tradition of Jewish progressive anticlericalism) by sitting out on the porch of his family's home and eating a huge salami sandwich. Later, just before his bar mitzvah, he was kicked out of Hebrew school for questioning the historical accuracy of his instructor. As a teenager, he organized a strike at a candy store and worked for Frances Sweeney's muckraking *Boston City Reporter*.

What's missing in these episodes of rebellion, and in the book as a whole, is a sense of the impact his struggles may have had on Hentoff's family. His mother and father come across in the narration as merely two more engaging characters who people this boy's Boston, their small successes and private tragedies handled with the civility and decency that characterize the whole account. But they are not drawn as parents, with all the incivility inherent in that relationship, and here the distance in Hentoff's narrative style becomes dismissive. By withdrawing from his story at these crucial moments, Hentoff the memoirist does the boy he writes about a disservice; it just seems shallow to conclude the painful story of how he slammed his first apartment's door in his mother's face with the throwaway line, "And she never brought me any more soup."

Boston Boy works, finally, not so much as an interior tale of spiritual growth, but as the story of a tolerant and generous boy's encounters with some remarkable men and women. Hentoff was lucky, and perhaps peculiarly gifted, to have made such friends. One of them, the great jazz drummer Jo Jones, offers, in some advice he gave to the teenage Hentoff, a clue for reading this absorbing memoir:

> Jo told me where the music had come from, where he had come from, and how to listen. He leaned forward. "Now, when you hear a jazz musician up on that stand, he is telling you what happened to him this afternoon, the night before, what has happened to him during his whole life. This is serious business. And"—Jo shot me with a long finger—"there is no way a jazz musician, if he is a real jazz musician, can hide any of that. . . . There is no way a jazz musician can hide whatever he's feeling. He might try. He

HOME

A: Let us be reasonable
B: There was no one
A: On the bridge
B: The cat has gone missing
A: Again—you can hear
B: The first geese
A: The moon was full
B: Last night, it was not so cold
A: It must be
B: Headlights
A: In the distance
B: A siren. Warning
A: Nothing but potholes.
B: Old man Stern is having his fits
A: Again. You can hear.
B: Another splash—
A: I'm cold
B: Let's not go back
A: That way

DAVID NEELIN

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might put on a big smile and say, 'Man, ain't life grand!' But soon as he starts playing, you can hear the hurt. You understand?"

You can hear, hidden in Hentoff's easeful reminiscences, the hurt and the dreams of his early life. The indirection with which he tells this familiar tale reveals more than the story itself; his reflections on an unconventional boyhood revel in the individuality that he has found—in jazz, in political struggles, in his own life—so captivating.

TERENCE MORAN

Terence Moran, a former TNR reporter/researcher, lives in Washington, D.C.

CITY ON THE SKIDS

Providence
by Geoffrey Wolff

(Viking/Elisabeth Sifton Books, 217 pp., $16.95)

The Puritans' avowed mission, as they sailed toward the New World, was to build "a city upon a hill," to establish a society of God's civilized elect in the wilderness. Providence, Rhode Island, the liberal outpost founded by Roger Williams in 1636, was literally such a place, spreading out on hills overlooking a bay, with churches, merchants' houses, libraries, a statehouse, and centers of learning eventually rising above the rest. And, like the Puritans' vision for a godly community on earth, it suffered greatly over the centuries. Commercialized, industrialized, compromised, it is now, Geoffrey Wolff suggests in his new novel, the Mafia capital of New England.

Adam Dwyer, the protagonist of Wolff's *Providence*, attempts to redeem, in Waspiest word and deed, the city where Dwyers have lived and ruled for generations. He does this in small, well-meaning, but predictable and rather dull ways: formerly a civil rights lawyer in the South, he is a public defender, a devoted husband to his wife, Clara, and the proud, gentle father of a teenage son. Predictable, that is, until he learns that he is dying. Wolff springs the discovery in a shock revelation as subtle and as sudden as a burglar taking shape in the shadows—a natural analogy for this fiction. For the other change in the Dwyers' lives comes when two burglars break into their house one night while they are sleeping. To Adam's goal of salvation and redemption is added that of revenge.

Geoffrey Wolff specializes in such transformative experiences. In *Black Sun*, a biography of Harry Crosby, a close brush with death on a World War I battlefield turns a spoiled Boston Brahmin into a death-worshiper and, evidently more shocking to the proper Boston that bred him, a literary decadent. The revelation in the autobiography *The Duke of Deception* concerns Wolff himself, when he is finally forced to acknowledge that his father is a pathological fraud. In *Providence*, the jolt of recognition turns the book from a narrow world of prep-school manners, remembered squash games, and "Bones" allusions to the larger, grittier, far more violent world of Providence itself. The personal goes public.

Wolff has found his city. Or, perhaps more accurately, given the scope and intensity of his relationship to it, the city has found him. (Cheever in Mafia country?) Town and gown, Wasps and Italians, legal establishment and criminal empire, morality and corruption coexist, clash, and threaten to merge in surprising and often gory ways. The book opens, somewhat parenthetically, with a corpse and a police investigation. They are only the first.

The Dwyers' demons are two young thugs, Skippy Carbone and his friend Baby. The asthmatic Skippy carries an inhaler, Baby a gun. (He also sucks his thumb.) They may be from the wrong side of the tracks, but Wolff captures that turf as well as he does the Dwyers', and adds portraits of Lisa, Skippy's drug-loving girl, and Tom Corcoran, the likable police detective who falls for Lisa and from grace. The fuller perspective these dead-end kids furnish is more than social; it borders on the surreal. We learn the contents of the Dwyers' house—inherited highboys, silver-framed photographs, and models of the sailing ships that brought the family its wealth—through the mercenary, uncaring eyes of thieves. Lisa's chemically induced highs give the most ordinary things a psychedelic glow. Skippy's second, nighttime visit to Clara, home alone, drives the Dwyers to such increasingly elaborate and ultimately futile security measures that we suspect they are really trying to shore up their lives against Adam's impending death.

But Wolff's larger social portrait perseveres. *Providence* is a history, a veiled commentary on how America as we know it came to be. In his juxtaposition of the Dwyers, whose ancestors got rich off the "Triangle Trade" (New England's agricultural products were traded for sugar or molasses, which were translated into rum, which went to buy African slaves), and Skippy Carbone, the enterprising apprentice mafioso who just wants "to be management," he exposes old and new styles of entrepreneurship and exploitation, and their kinship.

With equal success, Wolff applies the religious connotations of his novel's title to the miserably secular world he has chosen to portray. Played out on the Bunyanesque map of Providence and its surroundings—Hope Street and Benevolent Street, Devil's Bridge and Noman's Land—a cops-and-robbers story takes on an extra, but far from ponderous, dimension. Adam's efforts, under the sentence of death, to put his house in order against the odds of crime and cancer are a reckoning with old-fashioned providence—divine foreknowledge and unavoidable destiny. But Wolff goes one, modern, step further. He positions himself as the all-seeing, all-knowing force behind his story, wielding the power of foresight and informed distance that only storytellers have. This novel shows him relishing the role, playing games with genre (detective story, family saga, social history, political documentary), creating and destroying lives, speaking in Providence's many different voices. And, like any novelist who makes a tale ring true, he presents a world balanced between images of hope—friendly whales cavorting with each other off the New England coast—and hopelessness: Lisa, aspiring torch singer and utter druggie, crooning in a hotel lounge to a roomful of deaf-mutes.

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BOSTON DIARIST

All the Fine Young Kennedys

ONE OF LIFE'S little methods of reminding you that time marches on is the way a set of people that has always been older than you suddenly pops over to being younger. I first noticed this phenomenon with respect to ball players. (That was when I stopped thinking of baseball as a career possibility and started thinking of it as a metaphor.) After that, totemic groups started flashing by like exit signs on a freeway: cops, then heads of Third World revolutionary governments, then Wall Street boy wonders, then Reagan administration officials at the subcabinet level. This year, it's Kennedys.

NO DOUBT about it: 1986 will be remembered as the year the center of gravity of the Kennedy family shifted down a generation. There were always hordes of kids in the photographs taken at Hickory Hill and at the celebrity tennis tournaments, but this year a lot of those kids have suddenly emerged as adults, and they are doing adult things. Four in particular have broken out of the pack: Maria Shriver, who has just gotten married and is pursuing a successful career; Caroline Kennedy, who is about to do both of the above; and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and Joseph P. Kennedy III, who are running for Congress.

ONE THING THAT is immediately striking about this list of new-minted Kennedy achievers is that it is three-quarters female. Despite their many virtues, the Kennedys of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were a noticeably sexist lot, even by the standards of their own time. The JFK-RFK-EMK generation produced no equivalent of Eleanor Roosevelt, Margaret Chase Smith, or Maurine Neuberger, or even of Barbara Walters. This was certainly not for want of female talent. The Kennedy sisters, Eunice, Patricia, and Jean, were and are intelligent, forceful people. With a bit of the encouragement their brothers were given so lavishly, any or all of them could have had large public careers. This omission is now to be rectified. The new batch of Kennedys is manifestly free of the look-good-shut-up-stand-by-your-man philosophy that ruled their elders. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, now running for Barbara Mikulski's seat in Maryland, made her reputation by writing an article for the *Washington Monthly* that sought to reconcile feminism with older moral concerns. Her political style, admirably, is that of an austere, no-nonsense bluestocking. Maria Shriver is by contrast a glamour girl, and in interviews she has expressed her determination to play the traditional wifely role. Even so, her marriage to Arnold Schwarzenegger can be taken as a slyly ironic comment on her family's history of exaggerated machismo. Schwarzenegger, as he showed in *Pumping Iron* and *The Terminator*, is a clever fellow with a sense of humor about himself. But it's awfully hard to believe that Maria married him for his brains.

CAROLINE IS NOT YET a public figure in her own right, but no doubt she will be one day. She is about to marry Ed Schlossberg, which is to say she has had the discernment to choose a man who, like your Diarist, is in his early 40s and has a name that ends in "berg." (A pity she preferred a castle to a heart, but perhaps that is her tribute to Camelot.) After working for some years in the art world, she has gone back to school to take a law degree at Columbia. So it is not too farfetched to postulate a political career for her sometime in the future. It is pleasant to imagine that she, rather than one of her male cousins, will become the second President Kennedy. And the first President Schlossberg.

THE MALE COUSIN most likely to present an obstacle to any such plan is the one who, come next January, will occupy the seat in Congress that for the past 30 years has been held first by John F. Kennedy and then by Tip O'Neill. Joe Kennedy has many opponents for the Democratic nomination in the Eighth District of Massachusetts, but only one of them, State Representative Thomas Vallely, had a chance to beat him. Vallely has the face of a young Tip and the war record of a young JFK, and his campaign slogan—"The Other Guy"—was to the point. But Vallely dropped out of the race two months ago, and the remaining candidates, worthy though several of them are, have gone nowhere. Get ready, Washington. Here comes Mighty Young Joe.

JOE KENNEDY entered politics at the age of 15, when he worked his way through his father's funeral train, gravely shaking the hand of every last passenger on board. In 1979, speaking at the dedication of the John F. Kennedy Library, he delivered a wild attack on President Carter, who was on the platform with him. I was there as a member of Carter's staff, and I thought Joe's speech was puerile demagoguery. Still, it had energy. In recent years he has been running a company that sells heating oil cheaply to poor people. The universal applicability of his model is questionable; not everyone can get crude oil at a discount by having his picture taken with the suppliers. But this is surely no crime. I saw him for the second time in my life last week, at a campaign cocktail party in Belmont. His talk—a living-room version of his basic stump speech—was workmanlike, nothing more. What I hadn't expected—perhaps because my expectations were so low—was that he would be better at answering questions, which he did coherently and confidently, even when his views were obviously at odds with those of his mostly Harvard audience. (He said he approved of the Libyan air raid, for example.) He has answers, though this is not necessarily the same as having convictions; and he is jocular, though this is not necessarily the same as having a sense of humor. He is big, sharp-toothed, handsome in a rougher way than his uncles and father. He conveys a faint air of menace. His raw political talent is immense, but because it and he are so unformed there is always the chance that he will turn out to be dangerous. He will probably not be boring.

JUST ONE MORE. I am told that John, Caroline's brother, is trying to decide between law school and becoming an actor. I hope he picks acting. He is by far the best-looking Kennedy ever, and he would quickly become very big. The second JFK as a movie star: this is the kind of big mythic medicine the country is going to need once the Reagan bubble bursts. Come on, John. It's your duty.

H. H.

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